Northeast Indiana Works
Board of Directors
Meeting Agenda
June 1, 2018
9:00 – 10:30 a.m.
200 East Main Street, Ste 910
Fort Wayne 46802

Call to Order……..Stanley

Board Action
Consent Agenda..... Stanley
Board Meeting Minutes of 4.6.2018

Financial Report……Rice
Proposed Program Year 2018-19 Budget

Metrics Report……Randolph and O'Neal

Chief Elected Official's Remarks……Doug Bauman, Commissioner Adams County

Board Chair's Remarks..... Stanley

Board Meeting Schedule Program Year 2018-2019

October 5, 2018
January 11, 2019
April 5, 2019
June 7, 2019

NORTHEAST INDIANA WORKS BOARD

APRIL 6, 2018
9:00-10:30 AM

200 E. MAIN STREET, SUITE 910
FORT WAYNE 46802

DRAFT MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Darlene Stanley, Doug Bauman, Leslie Crist, Keith Davis, Alan Duff, Darryl Esterline, Jane Gresham, Tim Hartigan, Leroy Jackson, Jeff Kellam, Mark Michael, John Niederman and John Sampson.

STAFF PRESENT: Kathleen Randolph, Edmond O'Neal, Andrea Bolinger, Rick Farrant, Lori Rice, Karen Green and Anne Meadors.

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Darlene Stanley called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. A quorum was present.

II. Consent Agenda: Board Minutes/Financial Report/Audited Financial Statements and 990

The minutes of the January 5, 2018 meeting, the financial report and the audited financial statements and 990 were provided in the packet of advance materials. Jeff Kellam moved to approve all four items. LeRoy Jackson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Presentation and Discussion

Fred Payne, Commissioner of the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, gave an overview of his educational, professional and family background, then invited the board to engage in a dialogue with him about workforce-related topics. Among the topics: The new statewide workforce cabinet created by recent legislation, which Payne said is intended to enhance workforce development efficiency and alignment; the expansion of the employer training grant under Next Level Jobs; and a looming decrease in WIOA funding in the next program year. Overall, Payne said, he believes the state is moving in the right direction in the coordination and alignment of workforce resources, which likely will include enhanced career coaching options. Board members raised a number of concerns, including the need to better market credential-based careers; the process for choosing workforce cabinet members; and the need for continuity in high-level state administrative positions. John Sampson provided an overview of the broad collaborative economic and workforce development network in northeast Indiana that has led to a consistent focus on a well-aligned, demand-driven system aimed at boosting regional prosperity. Payne said he welcomed the feedback and would share it with others in state government. Board members thanked Payne for listening to their concerns and participating in a transparent discussion.

IV. Metrics Report

Kathleen Randolph and Edmond O'Neal briefly discussed the evolving metrics report and the changes board members will ultimately see. Randolph also mentioned forthcoming data and other informational enhancements to the Northeast Indiana Works website, including customized county newsletters.

V. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:37 a.m.

(The next meeting of the board will be from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. June 1, 2018 at 200 E. Main St., Suite 910, Fort Wayne.)

Northeast Indiana Works

Financial Report July 1, 2017 through April 30, 2018

Line	Expense Item	Budget	MTD Expenses	YTD Expenses	YTD Balance	Percent of Exp/Budget
1	Salaries and Benefits	2,992,670	219,379	2,347,851	644,819	78%
2	Travel/Training/Conferences	44,942	2,923	32,769	12,173	73%
3	Space/Insurance Costs	728,990	58,629	598,516	130,474	82%
4	Telephone & Internet	63,736	4,328	51,228	12,508	80%
5	Supplies, Postage & Delivery Fees	24,206	1,647	14,148	10,058	58%
6	Equipment/Equipment Lease/Maint	109,973	9,885	57,834	52,139	53%
7	Contracted Services	328,347	23,087	195,685	132,662	60%
8	Customer Related Expenses	1,535,546	43,919	619,498	916,048	40%
9	**Sub-Total Expense**	**5,828,410**	**363,797**	**3,917,529**	**1,910,881**	**67%**
	Other					
10	Contracted Service Providers - Non Customer	3,999,018	284,474	2,937,104	1,061,914	73%
11	Contracted Service Providers - Customer Related	399,743	25,749	302,625	97,118	76%
12	Planned Hold Back Program Year 2018	700,660	-	-	700,660	0%
13	**Sub-Total Other**	**5,099,421**	**310,223**	**3,239,729**	**1,859,692**	**64%**
14	**Total Expenses**	**10,927,831**	**674,020**	**7,157,258**	**3,770,573**	**65%**
	Program Expenses	**Budget**	**MTD Expenses**	**YTD Expenses**	**YTD Balance**	**Percent of Budget**
15	Adult*	2,749,119	185,526	1,945,883	803,236	71%
16	Dislocated Worker*	1,131,266	48,859	502,923	628,343	44%
17	Youth/Jobs for America's Graduates*	2,936,883	227,430	2,188,395	748,488	75%
18	Infrastructure Funding Agreement	215,000	14,385	171,030	43,970	80%
19	Adult Basic Education	2,644,824	185,170	1,869,237	775,587	71%
20	Other Grants and Contracts	1,250,739	12,650	479,790	770,949	38%
21	**Total Program Expenses**	**10,927,831**	**674,020**	**7,157,258**	**3,770,573**	**65%**

* Includes $1,547,314 PY16 Carry-In and $5,156,954 PY17 Allocation. Hold Back for PY18 will be $700,660

Northeast Indiana Works

Financial Report Summary July 1, 2017 through April 30, 2018

	Program Year Exhausted	**83%**

Summary

	Expenses to Date of Annual Budget Excluding Planned Hold Back Funds	**70%**
14/21	Expenses to Date of Annual Budget	**65%**

Expense Exceptions

8	Customer Related Expenses	**40%**

Skill UP Round 1 funding was leveraged with funding from employers, OCRA and CEDIT. The grant ended on December 31, 2017 and the leveraged funds were $298,923. Skill UP Round 2 funding has been extended to December 31, 2018. The Insurance IT courses, which were developed in partnership with Butler University and Northeast Indiana Specialty Insurers (NISI), are planned to kick off before the end of the program year. The next round of Building Futures is also planned to start before the end of the program year.

Program Exceptions

16	Dislocated Worker	**44%**

NEINWorks recently received an additional $113,000 of RESEA funding. This additional money plus the WIOA Dislocated Worker Admin and Jobs for Hoosiers funding will carry over to the new year.

20	Other Grants and Contracts	**38%**

Skill UP Round 2 funding has been extended to December 31, 2018. The insurance IT courses, which were developed in partnership with Butler University and NISI, are planned to kick off before the end of the program year. The next round of Building Futures is also planned to start before the end of the program year.

Northeast Indiana Works
Proposed PY18 Budget

PY18 Projected Budget	
Adult	1,125,017
Dislocated Worker	1,412,546
Youth/Jobs for America's Graduates	2,096,774
Infrastructure Cost Sharing	215,000
Skill UP	695,100
Re-Employment Service/ Jobs for Hoosiers	251,800
Business Consultant	120,000
Adult Education	2,525,813
Total PY18 Projected Budget	**8,442,050**

PY18 Projected Expenses	
WorkOne Operations	3,899,287
Customer Related Expenses	867,100
Service Providers	3,675,663
Total PY18 Projected Expenses	**8,442,050**

EGR3 Metrics Report

Reporting Period: July 1, 2017 - April 30, 2018

ASSESSMENT DATA

WorkKeys		National Career Readiness Certificates				Prove It
Examinees	Assessments	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Platinum	Assessments
512	1,437	11	59	30	1	3,760

BUSINESS SERVICES

Industry Sectors
Manufacturing
Financial Services
Food Processing
Health Care
Medical Devices
Transportation & Logistics

WorkOne Center Activities	Events
Customized Recruitment Events	278
Networking Events	338
Rapid Response Events	24
TAA Events	0
Rapid Response/TAA Events	0

Indiana Career Connect	Number of
Job Openings	36,179

REGIONAL CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

Job seeker overall satisfaction rate: **97%**

Employer overall satisfaction rate: **100%**

October -December 2017

FEDERAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Report Date: 10/1/2017 - 12/31/2017

	Employment 2Q			Employment 4Q			Credential Attainment			Median Earnings 2Q			Measurable Skill Gain		
	Actual	Goal	Met?	Actual	Goal	Met?	Actual	Goal	Met?	Actual	Goal	Met?	Actual	Goal	Met?
Adult	80.0	72.0	YES	NA	72.0	NA	NA	48.0	NA	$6,428	$5,250	YES	27.4	Baseline	NA
Statewide	79.3	72.0	YES	NA	72.0	NA	NA	48.0	NA	$5,898	$5,250	YES	32.6	Baseline	NA
Dislocated	78.4	73.0	YES	NA	72.0	YES	NA	46.0	NA	$7,200	$5,800	YES	16.5	Baseline	NA
Statewide	79.6	73.0	YES	NA	72.0	YES	NA	46.0	NA	$7,620	$5,800	YES	22.3	Baseline	NA
Youth	70.4	68.0	YES	NA	69.0	NA	NA	58.0	NA	$2,309	$2,100	YES	32.9	Baseline	NA
Statewide	73.2	68.0	YES	NA	69.0	NA	NA	58.0	NA	$2,865	$2,100	YES	35.5	Baseline	NA

CUSTOMER SERVICES INFORMATION

The data below is for WIOA non Youth only

Residence	Unique Customers Served		Services Provided		Average Services per Customer	New WIOA Enrollments	
Adams	36	2%	241	2%	6.69	6	1%
Allen	462	30%	3,048	29%	6.60	190	26%
DeKalb	191	12%	1,104	10%	5.78	130	18%
Grant	245	16%	2,009	19%	8.20	191	26%
Huntington	123	8%	1,182	11%	9.61	57	8%
LaGrange	10	1%	61	1%	6.10	3	0%
Noble	141	9%	756	7%	5.36	44	6%
Steuben	89	6%	609	6%	6.84	45	6%
Wabash	79	5%	488	5%	6.18	15	2%
Wells	48	3%	334	3%	6.96	19	3%
Whitley	53	3%	323	3%	6.09	22	3%
Outside Region	65	4%	457	4%	7.03	11	2%
Total	**1,542**	**100%**	**10,612**	**100%**	**6.88**	**733**	**100%**

WORKONE SERVICES

Skill Development and Training	Number of Customers
Occupational Skills Training	299
On-the-Job Training	32
Short-term Prevocational Training	0
Adult Education	203
Total Customers in Training	**534**

Youth Served & in Training	Number of Youth Customers
Jobs for America's Graduates	812
Out-of-School Students	291
Total Youth Customers	**1,103**

Adult Services	Number of Services
Counseling and Career Planning	2,489
Follow-up Services	310
Informational/Self-service	6,392
Skill Development Workshops	5,752

Youth Services	Number of Services
Career Guidance/Counseling	702
Supportive Services	494
Work Based Learning	87

Adult Education Providers	Active Students	Number of HSE's Obtained
Fort Wayne Community Schools	1008	134
Impact Institute	597	119
Learn More Center	148	41
Literacy Alliance	201	20
Marion Community Schools	181	27

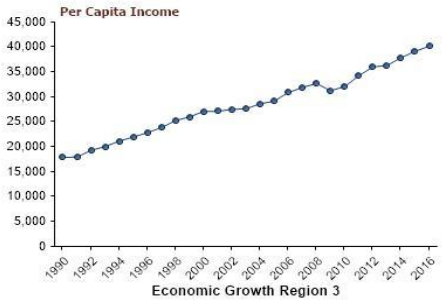
LABOR MARKET INFORMATION

Unemployment Rate	
EGR3	2.6%
Indiana	2.9%
U.S.	3.7%

Population (July 2017)	
EGR3	768,454
Indiana	6,666,818

Unemployment by County	People Unemployed	Percent Unemployed
Adams	385	2.2%
Allen	4,942	2.7%
DeKalb	515	2.3%
Grant	1,066	3.3%
Huntington	561	3.1%
LaGrange	402	2.0%
Noble	572	2.5%
Steuben	443	2.2%
Wabash	435	2.9%
Wells	345	2.4%
Whitley	418	2.4%

	Per Capita Income (2016)	Average Wage (April 2017)
Fort Wayne MSA		$43,594
EGR3	$40,170	
Indiana	$43,097	$43,926



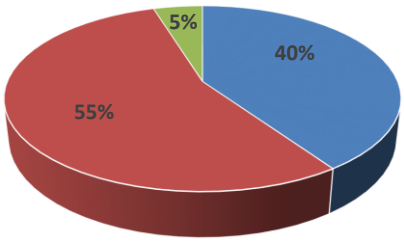
AVAILABLE FUNDING

Type of Funding	Amount
Formula	$4,417,833
**State Grants (Non-Formula)	$5,988,637
Local/Private	$521,361
*State	$0
Total Available Funding	**$10,927,831**

**State Grants (Non-formula) - Some grants include: Rapid Response, Adult Education, Jobs for America's Graduates, and Re-Employment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA).

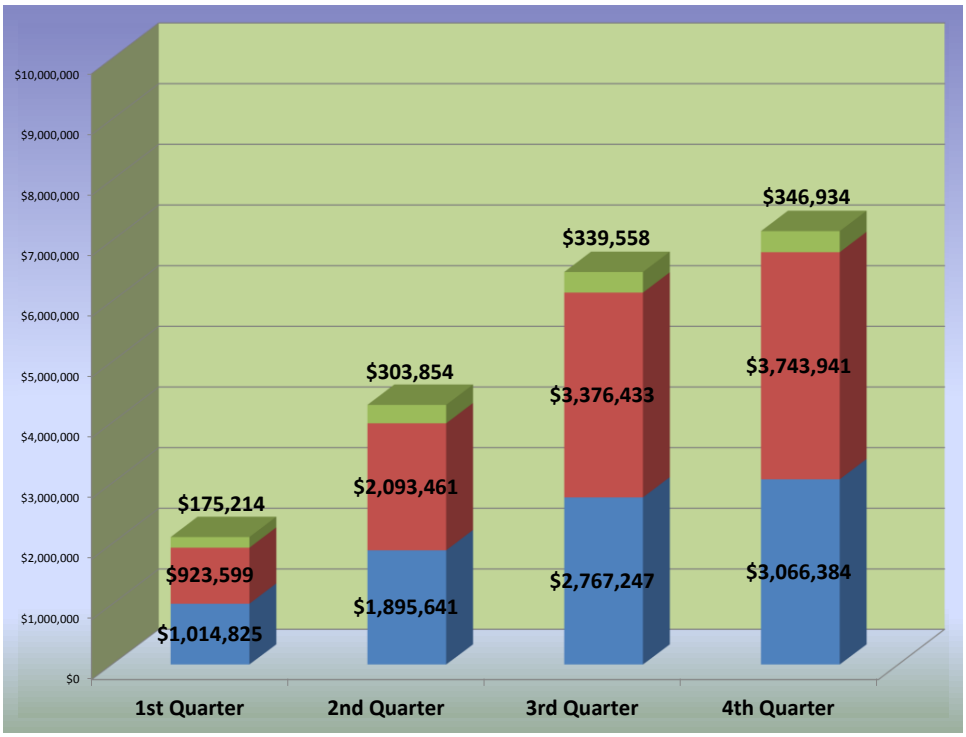
* Supports State Employees

Available Funding



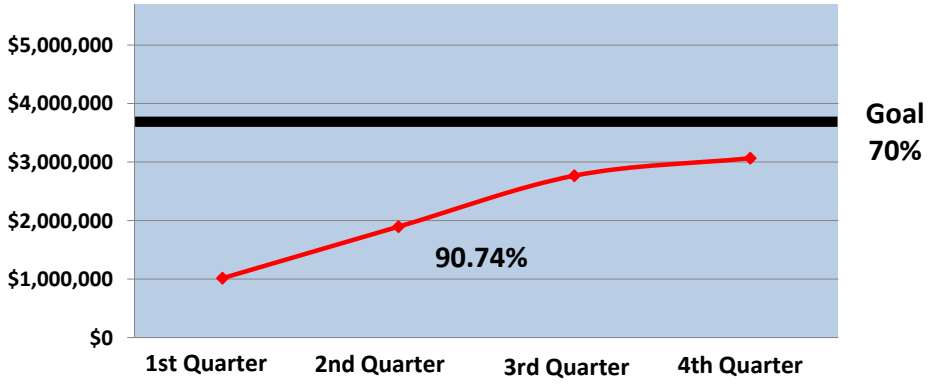
QUARTERLY EXPENSES

Program Year 2017 Quarterly Expenses



Through April 2018

WIOA Formula Expenditures



Through April 2018

R A N K I N G O F C O U N T Y D A T A

Unemployment Rates by County

April 2018 (Preliminary)
Prepared May 16, 2018

RANK	AREA	RATE	RANK	AREA	RATE
1	Vermillion	4.8	47	Pike	2.9
2	Lake	4.4	48	Pulaski	2.9
3	Fayette	4.1	49	Wabash	2.9
4	LaPorte	3.9	50	Carroll	2.8
5	Starke	3.9	51	Clark	2.8
6	Sullivan	3.9	52	Jefferson	2.8
7	Crawford	3.8	53	Allen	2.7
8	Newton	3.8	54	Floyd	2.7
9	Greene	3.7	55	Knox	2.7
10	Miami	3.6	56	Marshall	2.7
11	Orange	3.6	57	Tippecanoe	2.7
12	Owen	3.6	58	Union	2.7
13	Switzerland	3.6	59	Vanderburgh	2.7
14	Vigo	3.6	60	White	2.7
15	Randolph	3.5	61	Benton	2.6
16	Scott	3.5	62	Brown	2.6
17	Blackford	3.4	63	Hancock	2.6
18	Cass	3.4	64	Posey	2.6
19	Jasper	3.4	65	Rush	2.6
20	Madison	3.4	66	Shelby	2.6
21	Parke	3.4	67	Spencer	2.6
22	Porter	3.4	68	Tipton	2.6
23	Dearborn	3.3	69	Warren	2.6
24	Delaware	3.3	70	Clinton	2.5
25	Franklin	3.3	71	Decatur	2.5
26	Grant	3.3	72	Johnson	2.5
27	Lawrence	3.3	73	Montgomery	2.5
28	Fountain	3.2	74	Noble	2.5
29	Jennings	3.2	75	Warrick	2.5
30	Perry	3.2	76	Hendricks	2.4
31	Ripley	3.2	77	Jackson	2.4
32	Wayne	3.2	78	Martin	2.4
33	Clay	3.1	79	Wells	2.4
34	Henry	3.1	80	Whitley	2.4
35	Howard	3.1	81	Boone	2.3
36	Huntington	3.1	82	DeKalb	2.3
37	Putnam	3.1	83	Hamilton	2.3
38	Washington	3.1	84	Adams	2.2
39	Fulton	3.0	85	Bartholomew	2.2
40	Marion	3.0	86	Daviess	2.2
41	Monroe	3.0	87	Gibson	2.2
42	Morgan	3.0	88	Kosciusko	2.2
43	Ohio	3.0	89	Steuben	2.2
44	St. Joseph	3.0	90	Dubois	2.0
45	Harrison	2.9	91	Elkhart	2.0
46	Jay	2.9	92	LaGrange	2.0
				INDIANA	2.9

INDIANA
DEPARTMENT OF
WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT

Compendium:

NORTHEAST INDIANA WORKS

Bi-Monthly Newsletter, April 2018

Dear Board Member:

Stagnant or declining rural populations will portend increasing difficulties for those areas in fulfilling the employment needs of companies, data analyses show.

Statewide, the population in Indiana will continue to grow through 2050, but that growth will likely be fueled by urban areas, according to the Indiana Business Research Center (IBRC). A large number of mid-sized and rural communities, meanwhile, are projected to see population declines, the IBRC said.

Only 33 of 92 counties are expected to see a population increase between 2015 and 2050.

Region's rural population expected to decline through 2050

Regionally, just three of 10 northeast Indiana rural counties are projected to see population increases between 2015 and 2050, according to an analysis prepared by the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD). The three: Adams, LaGrange and Whitley. Population declines are projected in the seven others: Grant, DeKalb, Huntington, Noble, Steuben, Wabash and Wells.

The largest projected population increase percentage is expected to occur in LaGrange County (14.0 percent) and the largest decrease is expected in Wabash County (19.1 percent).

Overall, the population in the 10 rural northeast Indiana counties is expected to decline from 396,003 to 377,970 – or a decrease of 4.6 percent between 2015 and 2050.

Allen County will offset the overall rural decline. Allen County's population is projected to grow 17.8 percent, from 368,040 in 2015 to 433,735 in 2050.

Poverty Simulation in Noble County: More than 60 people attended a Noble New Way workshop in March at the Impact Institute in Kendallville.

The event was organized by the Noble New Way Movement — a team of community leaders who have joined forces to address barriers that stand between Noble County residents who live in poverty and their potential for economic stability.

Northeast Indiana Works is represented on the team by Director of Communications **Rick Farrant.**

Brightpoint conducted a poverty simulation in which participants experienced the rigors of living in poverty. That was followed by presentations covering transportation, mental illness and child care challenges, as well as education and training opportunities available to Noble County residents. Farrant and **Caroline Foster**, Impact's assistant adult education director, gave the presentation on education and training opportunities.

Performance Metrics Exceeded: Northeast Indiana Works exceeded Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) performance goals in all categories for the first and second quarters (July 1, 2017-December 31, 2017) of the program year.

The performance metrics generally cover employment, credential attainment, media earnings and measurable skill gains for adult and dislocated workers, as well as youth.

JAG Students Honored at State Conference: Four northeast Indiana high school students affiliated with the Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) program were honored at Indiana's JAG Career Development Conference in Indianapolis.

Iesha Young of Snider High School earned a second-place honor in the prestigious outstanding senior category, which recognizes seniors who exemplify the JAG spirit through commitment to education, community service and leadership.

Other local winners: **Taylor Geise**, Manchester High School senior, second place for career presentation; **Kyi Naing**, New Haven High School junior, third place for career presentation; **Cohen Marvel**, Manchester High School junior, third place for employability skills.

JAG in northeast Indiana is overseen by Northeast Indiana Works and carried out by Brightpoint. There are 15 JAG programs in the region's high schools. The programs are dedicated to preventing dropouts among young people who are most at risk.

Japanese Newspaper Takes Interest in UTEC Workers: An economics correspondent for the Asahi Shimbun, a national newspaper in Japan with a circulation of more than 6 million, has visited Huntington County twice in the last few months to report on the fate of workers laid off by United Technologies Electronic Controls (UTEC).

Daisuke Igarashi recently interviewed former UTEC worker **Kelly Schlotter** who, with the help of WorkOne Northeast, is working toward a certificate in CNC machining. Popular Mechanics magazine is also preparing a report on former UTEC employees.

More than 300 former or soon-to-be-displaced UTEC workers have sought some form of assistance through WorkOne.

Adult Education Coordinator Named: Northeast Indiana Works has hired **Barbara Hofmeyer** as the regional Adult Education Coordinator to further the mission and alignment of adult education services with workforce development initiatives.

Hofmeyer has more than 20 years' experience working in adult education at both the local and state levels. She most recently was an adult education consultant for DWD.

Northeast Indiana Works, as the fiscal agent and strategic partner, oversees a consortium of five adult education providers serving Economic Growth Region 3. The providers: Fort Wayne Community Schools (Allen County); Impact Institute (DeKalb, Huntington, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben and Whitley counties); Learn More Center (Wabash County); Marion Community Schools (Grant County); and the Literacy Alliance (Adams, Allen and Wells counties).

O'Neal on Workforce Summit Panel: Northeast Indiana Works President **Edmond O'Neal** is scheduled to appear on a panel at an Indiana Workforce Summit April 24 in Carmel.

The summit, organized by DWD, is also expected to feature the president of the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, the Indiana Secretary of State, and a representative of the Lumina Foundation.

Kimberly Tempel, Northeast Indiana Works director of business services, will participate in an unrelated strategic planning session April 17 at Trine University focusing on helping Steuben County employers grow and individuals achieve meaningful career pathways.

DWD Commissioner Visits Board: DWD Commissioner **Fred Payne** attended the April 6 Northeast Indiana Works board meeting and participated in a wide-ranging discussion with board members.

Among the topics: The new statewide workforce cabinet created by recent legislation, which Payne said is intended to enhance workforce development efficiency and alignment; the expansion of the employer training grant under Next Level Jobs; and a looming 10 percent decrease in WIOA funding in the next program year.

(The next board meeting will be from 9 to 10:30 a.m. June 1, 2018 at 200 E. Main St., Suite 910, Fort Wayne)

Jobs outnumber displaced workers at Manchester Metals

May 03, 2018

by ANDREW MACIEJEWSKI - amaciejewski@wabashplaindealer.com

NORTH MANCHESTER — Workforce development leaders say there are more jobs than workers laid off by Manchester Metals last Wednesday.

Nearly 30 former Manchester Metals employees met with employers and workforce development officers on Wednesday, during which displaced workers learned how to file for unemployment benefits and heard about some 200 job openings in the area.

The county is expected to see a 7 percent increase in job growth over the next decade, fueled in part by retirements, according to Rick Farrant, communications director for Northeast Indiana Works.

“It’s a job seeker’s market right now … We’re pretty confident that these folks are going to be able to find work,” he said.

Area employers took turns pitching open positions to those workers displaced by Manchester Metals’ depature.

“One of the things that was interesting is we basically have three viable industrial parks in this county, and every employer from all of our industrial parks were here,” Wabash Business Alliance CEO Keith Gillenwater said. “So, I think that speaks volumes.”

Around 90 workers were left unemployed after Manchester Metals sent workers home and locked doors Wednesday without warning town officials or workers.

Corporate representatives for Manchester Metals and its parent company, United Stars, Inc., have not talked with local public officials since closing the foundry’s doors last week. Some workers say they learned of the company’s shutdown via text messages, while others learned about it on social media.

“I’ve not heard from anybody in their entity, which is pretty disappointing,” Gillenwater said. “All of the people here were not here on their own volition.”

Gillenwater believes he will eventually hear from the company regarding its intent to sell or reopen the facility.

“We know they’re not going to sit on an empty plant forever,” he said.

“Eventually, if Manchester Metals doesn’t come back and we have an opportunity to sell the building and stuff, empty buildings don’t last long,” Gillenwater continued. “It’s just the process takes time and we can only move as quickly to fill it as the company is willing to give us information and allow us to start doing out job.

“Unfortunately, this in not the first time a business has left, and it’s not the last time a business will go out of business. So, we put the support services that we all built, Work One, Economic Development and the community to come together and try to bring those opportunities back and see what you can do.

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This Week's Circulars

Hover for **Circular**

Hover for **Circular**

Hover for **Circular**

Hover for **Circular**

LOCAL GUIDE (HTTP://LOCAL.WABASHPLAINDEALER.COM/)

FEATURED BUSINESSES **RECENT ADS**

(http://local.wabashplaindealer.com/wabash-in/auto/auto-dealers/dorais-chevrolet-(260)%20563-2123)
Dorais Chevrolet
Wabash, IN

(http://local.wabashplaindealer.com/wabash-in/auto/auto-dealers/dorais-chevrolet-buick-gmc-260-563-2123)
Dorais Chevrolet Buick GMC
Wabash, IN

(http://local.wabashplaindealer.com/warsaw-in/medical/health-care-facilities/vein-institute-and-medi-spa-inc-(574)%20267-1900)
Vein Institute & Medi Spa Inc.
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The Journal Gazette

Sunday, May 06, 2018 1:00 am

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Disabilities can thwart job search

Many groups help with training, placement

SHERRY SLATER | The Journal Gazette

About this project

Like any other students, they have goals and aspirations. They play sports and attend dances. But special education students face special challenges.

A teacher shortage affects their education. High school graduation changes threaten their future. Employers often overlook them.

Today is the final story in a Journal Gazette series that began April 22 focusing on these students.

By the numbers

40.7 million: Americans with disabilities

20.8 million: Americans with disabilities of working age (18 to 64) in 2016

36 percent: Fraction who were employed

36 percent: Hoosiers with disabilities of working age who were employed

50 percent: North Dakota and South Dakota exceeded this benchmark for residents with disabilities who were employed

5,329: Increase in Hoosiers with disabilities who were working in 2016 from 2015

175,379: Total of Hoosiers with disabilities working in 2016

2x: Hoosiers without disabilities are twice as likely to be employed than those who have physical or mental limitations

Source: The Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire

At a glance locally

Area employers that hire people with physical or developmental disabilities include:

• AMC Theaters at Jefferson Pointe

• Cintas

• Cookie Cottage

• Glenbrook Square

• Holiday Inn Express

• Home Depot

• Kroger

• Lutheran Health Network

• Matilda Jane Clothing

• McDonald's

• Memorial Coliseum

• Old National Bank

• Parkview Health

• Scotty's Brewhouse

• Sodexo

• Sweetwater Sound

• YMCA

• Source: Easterseals Arc of Northeast Indiana

When unemployment is low, most workers feel reasonably sure they can land another job if they don't like the one they have.

But it's not that easy for some.

People with physical, mental and other disabilities often get shut out of the workforce.

Only 36 percent of the 20.8 million work-age Americans with identified disabilities were employed in 2016, according to data from the Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire.

Indiana matched the U.S. rate, placing it 27th of the 50 states.

In a region where unemployment is below 4 percent, it doesn't make economic sense to leave so many capable people on the sidelines, some disability advocates say.

Others feel a deeper calling. They say hiring people with disabilities is a moral issue.

RespectAbility, a nonprofit that advocates for equality, equity and inclusion, paints the problem in stark terms on its website. “Ableism is a real thing just like racism, sexism and other isms,” the organization states.

The Rockville, Maryland, group works to promote “the talents of people with physical, learning, sensory, intellectual, mental health and other disabilities.”

The ratio of people who fall into that category, RespectAbility says, is 1 in 5.

First paying jobs

Various local nonprofits, including Goodwill Industries and Scherer Resources, work with clients with disabilities, preparing them for the workforce and placing them in positions that fit their skills.

“If you want to work, we'll find a job for you,” said Thomas Summerville, Easterseals Arc of Northeast Indiana's vice president of employment and community supports.

The local Easterseals Arc, which serves more than 800 clients, connects employers with people with disabilities who need and want jobs.

Lisa Dobynes and Shelby Mealer are Easterseals Arc clients. Both are in their first paying jobs.

Dobynes, 47, has been a housekeeper at Miller's Merry Manor for two months. Her duties include vacuuming, mopping, dusting and emptying wastebaskets.

“I just love people to death. And I've got a special heart for the older folks,” she said.

Dobynes, who stumbled over spelling her last name, works two mornings a week about 14 hours total. Making eye contact doesn't come naturally. And she welcomes the help when an Easterseals Arc staff member offers to explain some details of her life.

Even so, Dobynes is well-suited to succeed on the job.

“I love to keep things neat and clean,” she said. “I don't like things out of place. It makes me nervous.”

Some disabilities are easier to spot than others.

Mealer, 26, doesn't display any obvious limitations but qualifies for a group home arranged by Easterseals Arc because she has an intellectual or development disability and has a Medicaid waiver for services.

She works in the gardening department at Lowe's, organizing new shipments of flowers and answering customers' questions. Before getting hired, she had no experience with plants.

“I just really want to learn about it,” she said.

Before either woman was hired, Easterseals Arc staff worked with their employers to identify necessary skills to do the work and talked with clients to determine who was ready to fill the positions.

Getting ready

Easterseals Arc isn't a passive matchmaking service. The nonprofit helps people with disabilities develop new skills they need to succeed in the workplace.

Dobynes and Mealer completed Easterseals Arc's Employment Readiness Academy, created in partnership with Lutheran Hospital.

Clients go through an 18-week program of three six-week rotations in departments including food service, housekeeping, shipping and receiving, mail room and gift shop.

Training addresses hard skills and soft skills.

Hard skills include negotiating a cart with dinner trays onto an elevator and delivering meals to the correct rooms. Soft skills include making eye contact and small talk with customers and remaining calm in frustrating situations.

Summerville, said the program leads to 58 percent job placement for graduates. Some get jobs at Lutheran Hospital, but they also find jobs at other local workplaces.

It can take a couple of weeks to more than a year to prepare a client for outside work, Summerville said.

Some people just need help with a résumé, he said. Others have many more barriers, including paralysis or other physical limitations.

None of that disqualifies someone from finding paid work. Even someone unable to move his arms and legs can potentially meet the requirements for a call center position or as a greeter in a big-box store, for example.

Big transition

Chris Gomez, Kroger's regional manager, said the grocery chain doesn't make assumptions about what job applicants can do.

Gomez said inclusion and diversity are two of the company's six core values.

“We have all kinds of positions in our stores,” he said. “With all our associates, we pair the right skill sets with the right job.”

Kroger encourages organizations serving people with disabilities to bring their clients to the retailer's hiring fairs.

The chain's hiring managers also attend disability expos hosted by groups including AWS Foundation, a local nonprofit that describes its mission as helping children and adults with disabilities “live as independently as possible, be included in the community and function at their highest potential.”

The expos, also called transition fairs, allow special ed students to meet with employers and learn about available jobs.

“Transition” is a word that gets used a lot at AWS Foundation, which awarded $3.2 million in grants last year to organizations that serve people with disabilities.

Among those are grants to schools that want to launch vocational training for special education students.

Patti Hays, the nonprofit's CEO, said her organization wants to help students transition from the classroom to the labor market. The idea that the people with physical and developmental disabilities can function well in the workplace is fairly new, she said.

“There's that tyranny of low expectations,” Hays added.

Expanding opportunities

AWS Foundation recently approved support for a new local initiative designed to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Greater Fort Wayne Inc., a nonprofit that bills itself as the “single point of contact for economic growth in Allen County,” requested funds to underwrite a new staff position. The three-year grant totals $245,000.

The new disability employment services coordinator started work last week.

Many Allen County employers rely on Greater Fort Wayne for help with business issues, including finding workers in a tight employment market, Hays said.

“To have a staff member who can talk with employers about hiring those with disabilities and to answer their questions and help guide the process was a great idea,” she added.

Chuck Surack, founder of Sweetwater Sound, and Kathy Callen, community engagement executive at Old National Bank, championed the position. They worked with Eric Doden, Greater Fort Wayne's CEO, to create the vision, according to Cheri Becker, who wrote the grant application.

“It's a focus that we want to bring to our investor members,” said Becker, Greater Fort Wayne's vice president of investor services and programs. “Our goal is to ensure that employment is open to all individuals who are able and who want to work.”

Old National is among employers that embrace the contributions of people with physical disabilities. The Evansville-based financial services provider has numerous success stories, including a teller who doesn't have legs.

Ron Hagy, Old National's senior vice president and talent acquisition manager, said making a successful match is more than finding out what a person can do. It involves finding out what interests the job applicant.

Kathy Schoettlin, a spokeswoman for Old National, said the bank has hired people with physical disabilities to work in marketing, operations, wealth management and public relations in addition to teller positions.

An accountant for the company relies on a device that straps around her forehead to use the keyboard because cerebral palsy has limited her ability to use her arms and hands.

In Old National's call center, a man in a wheelchair answers account holders' questions.

“The customers, of course, have no idea,” Hagy said.

Coveted qualities

People with disabilities have numerous champions in the region. High schools and colleges are among those offering job skills training for people with disabilities.

Northeast Indiana Works encourages employers to consider hiring people with disabilities, especially as the availability of talent from more traditional sources wanes, said Rick Farrant, Northeast Indiana Works' spokesman.

Northeast Indiana Works operates 11 WorkOne Northeast career centers, where it helps individuals train for new jobs and employers fill open positions.

Summerville, of Easterseals Arc, believes employers will keep hiring people with disabilities even after unemployment rates increase.

Employers like the supportive partnership that Easterseals Arc offers, Summerville said. Staff accompany clients on their jobs for the first several weeks to make sure the client understands the rules and their responsibilities.

Later, if a problem arises with a worker, management can contact Easterseals Arc and ask for help resolving the issue.

“It's helping their bottom line because they don't have to keep hiring” and training new people, Summerville said.

Farrant believes people with disabilities also contribute to a positive working environment. In an email, he described the individuals as eager to work, loyal and committed to doing a job well.

Employers' hiring discussions should always include people with disabilities, Farrant said.

“Generally speaking,” he added, “people with disabilities possess the qualities employers covet.”

Hays, of AWS Foundation, agreed.

“It's not uncommon that you find the individual with a disability is a loyal and dependable and hardworking employee,” she said.

People with disabilities are typically grateful for the opportunity to work, advocates say.

Last month, Dobynes, the Miller's Merry Manor housekeeper, was preparing to go shopping with her first real paycheck. She planned to buy new clothes with some of the money and save the rest.

“I almost fainted when I saw that,” she said of the amount, which was more than $100. “I thought I was dreaming.”

sslater@jg.net (mailto:sslater@jg.net)

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Fort Wayne IN 46802

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BRIEFS

Job service gets SSA designation

Staff, news services

Northeast Indiana Works has been designated an employment network by the Social Security Administration, allowing the nonprofit organization to offer a Ticket to Work program to help eligible people with disabilities succeed in the workforce.

The local workforce development organization becomes the fourth organization in the region and 32nd in the state to receive the employment network designation, according to a news release it issued Tuesday. The Ticket to Work program will be offered through Northeast Indiana Works' WorkOne Northeast career centers.

Ticket to Work, which is free and voluntary, is designed to help people with disabilities move toward financial independence and connects them with the services and support they need to succeed in the workforce.

Among the free, supportive one-on-one services being offered to Ticket to Work participants through WorkOne Northeast: pre-employment training and assistance, such as resume development, interview training, how to find jobs, and benefits counseling, as well as ongoing supports once a person is employed.

People interested in learning more about the program can visit or call their nearest WorkOne Northeast career center. A list of the career centers can be found at www.neinworks.org (http://www.neinworks.org)

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