



## Board Report

April 27, 2022

### Participant Service Goals for PY'21

Program	Regional Plan Goals	Carry-In Clients	New in PY'21 (July 1-March 31)	Total	Goal %
WIOA Adult	879	195	279	474	54%
WIOA Dislocated Worker	211	48	16	64	30%
WIOA Out of School Youth	172	19	21	40	23%
WIOA In School Youth	43	14	8	22	51%

#### COVID-19: Regional Update

Due to decreased COVID positivity across the region, WorkOne locations were re-opened to the general public as of February 28<sup>th</sup>. The continued reduction in COVID cases allowed for WorkOne locations to end their mask mandate as of March 4<sup>th</sup>. Staff and customers are still given the opportunity to wear masks if needed or requested.

The Dislocated Worker Disaster Recovery fund, which has previously provided temporary workers to assist with cleaning and monitoring office capacity limits, expired as of February 15, 2022. Region 8 was able to hire several of these individuals as Workforce Training Assistants with funding provided by the WIOA Performance Support Grant. These staff continue to sanitize work areas within the WorkOne offices and limiting capacity in each office to maintain social distancing recommendations.

Region 8 expects a significant number of job seekers to utilize WorkOne services in the upcoming months as the additional Unemployment Insurance benefits have ceased and the Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant funding has been extended through June 30, 2022. Region 8 has been able to fill Workforce Training Coordinator positions in Brown and Monroe Counties, leaving one vacancy in Lawrence. Region 8 will continue to seek qualified candidates to fill this position.

## Region 8 County Unemployment Rates

County	October	November	December	January	February
Brown	2.1%	1.8%	1.2%	2.3%	2.6%
Daviess	1.7%	1.4%	.8%	1.7%	1.9%
Greene	2.6%	2.1%	1.4%	2.6%	2.9%
Lawrence	2.4%	2.0%	1.3%	2.5%	2.8%
Martin	1.7%	1.5%	.9%	1.8%	2.0%
Monroe	2.2%	1.7%	1.0%	2.0%	2.3%
Orange	3.0%	2.6%	1.6%	2.9%	3.1%
Owen	2.6%	2.2%	1.4%	2.5%	2.9%

As of February 2022, Indiana's unemployment rate was 2.3%, which was well below the national rate of 3.8%. All of the Region 8 county rates have fallen below the state average. The labor force participation rate rose from 61.9% to 62.1%.

Region 8 staff continue to answer basic UI questions and help customers use WorkOne computers to file UI claims. Customers who need additional assistance are required to call or email the UI Contact Center at DWD. Customers at the Linton and Bloomington WorkOne locations have the option of using a designated phone to speak directly with an Unemployment Specialist at the UI Contact Center. Customers have the option to file by phone if they do not have access to a computer or smart phone to file online.

Staff continue to assist customers with ID.me, a highly secure identity verification process that was implemented in February 2021 to ensure claimants are able to access their unemployment benefits. This process was adopted due to claimants from several states being victimized by criminals using stolen identities to submit fraudulent unemployment claims. DWD has provided Region 8 with a few smart phones to assist customers in completing this process.

## RESEA

The Re-Employment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program targets unemployed individuals who are most likely to exhaust UI benefits and provides career services designed to help them get back to work more quickly. Region 8 has maintained RESEA services using a telephonic/virtual service model. From January to March 2022, 547 individuals were required to participate in RESEA services. Of those required to participate, 220 Assessment Interviews were completed with an RESEA Specialist, which equates to a 40% Successful Interview rate for program participants. Of the remaining claimants, 124 had returned to work and the others declined services due to various reasons. During the same timeframe, 76 participants were selected for SUBRESEA. Of those required to participate 33, successfully completed their required 1:1 meeting. Of those remaining claimants, 12 returned to work and the remaining declined services. The Region 8 RESEA team will resume in-person orientation and 1:1 meeting in the local WorkOne locations beginning in May 2022 which will also allow staff the opportunity to increase enrollments at the local WorkOne offices.

## WARN/Non-WARN Notices and Rapid Response Activities

There have been no WARN notices since the last board meeting.

## Performance Highlights and Business Services Updates

**From July 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022, the Business Service Team assisted with the following:**

- **Work Based Learning – 35** customers have participated in work-based learning (WBL) with regional employers.
- **WorkKeys - 189** WorkKeys assessments have been administered since July. Business Services staff continue to engage with employers throughout the region to discuss the utilization of the assessments as part of their hiring process. There were 2 Platinum and 1 Silver National Career Readiness Certificates awarded to Region 8 customers during this time frame.
- A total of **243 Distinct Employer contacts** were made, representing a **41%** achievement of our annual program goal of 600 contacts.
- A total of **1288 Business Contacts** were made, representing a **77%** achievement of our annual program goal of 1,680 contacts. During this same time frame, employers searched **1,436 resumes** using the ICC resume database to fill job openings.

**Ongoing Hiring Events and Job Fairs have begun taking place throughout the region:**

- WorkOne hosted, sponsored and attended 11 hiring events throughout the region. A few of these events included the Orange County Job Fair, I.U Building and Landscape Services Job Fairs and IU Residential Program Services Job Fairs. Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) Lindsey Smith is pictured below meeting with employers at the Orange County Job Fair.



## GRANT UPDATES

### National Dislocated Worker Employment Recovery Grant (DW-ERG)

Region 8 received approximately \$350,000 to provide Career Services, Training and Supportive Services to Dislocated Workers who have been affected by COVID-19. As of March 31<sup>st</sup>, 83 eligible workers have been enrolled to participate in career and training services.

#### Success Story:

*Cassandra is 41 years old, married and has no children. She was laid off from her full-time job when her contract ended in June 2021. Cassandra participated in RESEA but did not take the opportunity during that time to accept job search assistance from her local WorkOne. She does have education that would make her a valuable asset to employers, but she struggled to navigate the labor market to find suitable employment. She found a part-time position but it did not provide adequate wages for her to be able to stop drawing unemployment compensation. Cassandra also became concerned because she was unable to find a job within a commutable distance. When she attended her SUBRESEA appointment, she accepted the offer to be referred to a Career Advisor. Cassandra met with Career Advisor Kayla Russell at the Linton WorkOne and was enrolled in WIOA and the ER-DWG grant. During the assessment process, Kayla help Cassandra locate a full-time remote position as a Benefits Specialist for Health Advocate Professionals. Cassandra applied and was offered full-time employment in December 2021. She started her position in Jan 2022 and is happy with the services she received from her local WorkOne.*

### WIOA Support Grant PY21

DWD extended another opportunity for Workforce Boards to apply for WIOA Performance Support Grant funding that must be spent by March 31, 2023. Region 8 was awarded approximately \$485,000 to fund initiatives to assist with capacity building, target populations, employer engagement and youth engagement. The three strategies being used to address these initiatives are **Pathways to apprenticeships, Youth Engagement and WorkOne Customer Services.**

1. **Pathways to Apprenticeship-** Apprenticeship and Workbased Learning Coordinator Gail Mitchell is recruiting apprentices and employers for the CCMA program as well as assisting in monitoring of apprentice worksites for biomanufacturing apprentices. She is also supporting regional staff in worksite development for WIOA participants in need of work-based learning. One customer is currently being funded for training as a part of this initiative as well.
2. **Youth Engagement-** Youth Engagement Coordinator Juanita Sciscoe has been actively contacting youth organizations and the following types of agencies to promote our youth services and discuss cross referral efforts: Region 8 High Schools counselors/teachers, Adult Education, JAG programs, Probation, Department of Child Services and CASA programs. She has also attended career fairs at local high schools which allows her to discuss youth services with their students. This effort has already yielded significant interest from JAG students and other high school youth who would like to take advantage of employment and training services following graduation. Many of these youth will not access the WorkOne Centers until they have completed graduation in May; therefore, full measurement of these efforts will likely become apparent at the end of June 2022.
3. **WorkOne Customer Service-**Region 8 has hired six (6) Workforce Training Assistants to provide support in the local offices. This allows for the Career Advisors to focus on enrolling eligible participants in the various programs currently being provided in Region 8.



## Next Level Jobs: Workforce Ready Grant and Employer Training Grant

Region 8 received \$434,000 of Workforce Ready Grant funding to provide short-term training for customers during the period 1/1/22 to 6/30/22. As of April 22nd, approximately \$409,000 has been obligated and 101 individuals have been approved for tuition assistance.

As of February 2022, Region 8 has been awarded \$970,000 to reimburse employers for training new employees and/or the upskilling of incumbent workers. Additional guidance for this reimbursement process was sought and has since been provided. Those reimbursements should begin in May and the contract is scheduled to end in December 2022.

Employers who would like more information about how to apply for these funds should contact Robin Branch ([rbranch@vinu.edu](mailto:rbranch@vinu.edu)) or Earl Isom ([eisom@dwd.in.gov](mailto:eisom@dwd.in.gov)).

### Bloomington Afghan Resettlement

Exodus International is a resettlement agency responsible for the relocation of Afghan refugees in Bloomington, IN. Exodus recently settled 8 families totaling 32 individuals. These families have a connection in some way to the community. Region 8 Operations Manager Erin Brewer and Regional Support Manager Don Kent attended a meeting with Exodus International Director, Erin Aquino, on February 4th to discuss collaborative efforts to provide services to these refugees. Director Aquino gave a presentation for Afghan resettlement services on March 2 to the Bloomington WorkOne Staff and prepared to refer individuals to the offices. As of March 11, Region 8 received the first three referrals from Exodus International for assistance with employment for Afghan Resettlement customers.

During this time, an additional asset for these refugees came in the form of an applicant for a Region 8 Workforce Training Coordinator position. Malalai "Molly" Yawar is originally from Afghanistan and had recently relocated to the Bloomington area seeking employment. She is a multilingual and multicultural individual who had previously worked with the U.S. military to provide interpreter services and training at military bases throughout the country.

Molly expressed great interest and passion in assisting individuals with barriers to employment. She began working for Region 8 at the end of March 2022. Molly has already begun shadowing and working with participants in the Bloomington WorkOne. During a recent appointment with one of the Afghan refugees, Molly was quick to volunteer with assisting the client by explaining the difference between working in Afghanistan as compared to the U.S., and was able to coach him for an upcoming interview he had scheduled. The client's sponsor who was accompanying him commented what an asset she thought Molly was to our organization.



Region 8 was well represented on March 18<sup>th</sup> at the state Career Development Conference held at Ivy Tech Fall Creek in Indianapolis. Students competed with first place winners from the 11 other regions in the state. Edgewood High School came in 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Chapter Commercial competition. Region 8 would like to congratulate the following JAG students for placing at the state CDC (pictured below): Jasmine Scudder, Mitchell HS- 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the Critical Thinking competition, Mason Davis, Hoosier Hills Career Center-3<sup>rd</sup> place in the Entrepreneurship Plan competition and John McLain, Mitchell High School- honorable mention in the outstanding senior competition.



Edgewood JAG students volunteered at Pantry 279 located in Ellettsville. We love when our students can get out of the classroom and give back to a community that gives so much to them! Did you know nothing at Pantry 279 goes to waste? Food that has expired gets picked up by local farmers and fed to their animals. What a great way to reduce waste and keep the cycle of giving going!

Paoli JAG spent the day at the Orange County Humane Society. Students intended to paint, but plans were changed at the last minute due to bad weather. Instead, students walked dogs, cleaned and organized the facility, gathered trash and loved on the animals. Everyone left exhausted and a bit wet, but look at those happy puppies and smiling kids!

