



Board Report

October 28, 2020

COVID-19: Regional Update

On September 28, 2020, Region 8 transitioned all WorkOne locations from appointment-only to general public access. Prior to reopening, staff were provided with refresher training on social distancing, use of PPE and identification of potential COVID-19 symptoms. Office staff continue to sanitize work areas used by clients as well as high touch items within the WorkOne office locations. WorkOne South Central also set a maximum capacity for each office to ensure the safety of our clients and staff. WorkOne staff continue to have the option of providing virtual services, or customers can request to schedule an appointment. There have been no issues noted to date.

Region 8 continues to utilize the Dislocated Worker Grant – Disaster Recovery funds to hire dislocated workers as temporary employees in our offices to assist with continual cleaning of WorkOne premises and management of maximum numbers of customers in the office at a given time. Temporary positions are currently filled in Bloomington, Bedford, Linton and Orange County WorkOne offices.

Vincennes University has also hired one additional Career Advisor for Bloomington, and is currently preparing to hire another in Brown County. Posted positions in Lawrence and Owen Counties are still vacant at this time. The hiring of these additional individuals will increase the ability of Region 8 to meet the employment and training needs of the customers in our area.

RESEA

On March 16, 2020, the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) suspended all RESEA, JFH and Sub-RESEA in-person services due to COVID 19 concerns. State offices closed on March 23rd which resulted in the cancellation of not only Initial RESEA Orientations, but also Assessment Interviews and Follow-up meetings for JFH and Sub-RESEA services. All UI claimants selected for RESEA, JFH and Sub-RESEA programs were automatically exempted from these Re-employment Services. On May 18, 2020, the first group of RESEA clients was selected under the new Virtual Service delivery format. Although Region 8 was able to select 60 clients per week for Virtual services, technology limitations, claimant suspicions of fraud, and disregard of email notifications resulted in a 70% Failure to Participate rate. The Virtual Service delivery model allows for exemptions rather than placing a hold on Unemployment Benefits due to claimant non-compliance. Virtual services are scheduled to continue through the end of this calendar year.

Region 8 County Unemployment Rates

County	April	May	June	July	August	September
Brown	16.2%	12.5%	11.0%	14.3%	5.7%	5.1%
Daviess	8.4%	5.6%	5.7%	7.6%	3.5%	3.1%
Greene	12.8%	9.0%	9.2%	7.2%	5.7%	5.0%
Lawrence	17.6%	11.3%	10.0%	7.2%	5.9%	5.4%
Martin	8.8%	5.9%	6.6%	6.8%	3.9%	3.5%
Monroe	10.1%	7.8%	9.0%	6.7%	5.4%	4.4%
Orange	25.8%	18.5%	20.2%	5.0%	8.1%	6.9%
Owen	12.1%	8.9%	9.4%	4.2%	5.9%	4.9%

As of September, Indiana's unemployment rate dropped to 6.2%, below the national rate of 7.2%. Most of the Region 8 county unemployment rates have remained below the state average. Orange County's rate of 6.9% is likely due to the continued restrictions that negatively impact tourism opportunities.

Region 8 staff continue to answer basic UI questions and are currently utilizing our office assistants and other staff to help customers use WorkOne computers to file 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 the BAT phone to speak directly with an Unemployment Specialist at the UI Contact Center. Customers have also been given the option to file by phone if they do not have access to a computer or smart phone to file online.

Labor Market Review: UI Claims

Indiana's unemployment rate from January to mid-March was one of the lowest rates in the nation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the state had a drastic increase in UI claims near the end of March 2020. From April to June, more than 10,000 claims were filed throughout the region. Since July, the number of claimants has steadily declined to approximately 6,400 claimants as of September 30th.

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) continues for eligible claimants until December 25, 2020. PUA is a temporary federal UI program for individuals not otherwise eligible for UI benefits, including the self-employed, independent contractors, gig economy workers, and those seeking part-time employment. Additionally, PEUC (Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation) also provided up to 13 weeks of benefits to claimants who had exhausted their regular UI benefits.

DWD also began making Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) payments to eligible claimants during the week of Sept. 21st. LWA was funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide \$300 per week to supplement unemployment benefits for those who have an unemployment benefit amount of at least \$100 and are out of work due to COVID-19. LWA funding covered only the period from the week ending Aug. 1st to the week ending Sept. 5th. Since March 8th, DWD has paid over \$5 billion to nearly 670,000 Hoosiers.

Performance Highlights and Business Services Updates

- **Work Based Learning** - In the last three months, an average of 11 customers were active in work-based learning (WBL) with regional employers. Nine (9) of those work experience opportunities were new in the quarter.
- **WorkKeys**- Over 43 assessments were administered in the last three months. Business Services staff continue to engage with employers throughout the region to discuss the utilization of the assessments as part of their hiring process.
- From July to September 2020, a total of 89 Distinct Employer contacts were made which represents an achievement of 25% of our annual program goal of 600 contacts.
- From July to September 2020, a total of 194 Business Contacts were made which represents an achievement of 12% of our annual program goal of 1,680 contacts. During this same quarter, employers searched 436 resumes using the ICC resume data base to fill job openings.
- Ongoing Hiring Events and Job Fairs have been severely limited due to COVID-19. Business Services staff are currently working to host several virtual job fairs with employers such as Catalent, Baxter and Boston Scientific. They are also assisting in virtual mock interviews upon request.
- Business Service team members are currently promoting access to 180 Skills for local employers. 180 Skills will allow Hoosiers to gain key workforce skills free of charge through an online library of courses. Individuals who enroll will have the opportunity to complete courses designed to improve general employability skills relevant across job sectors or develop the foundational knowledge to enter Indiana's manufacturing industry.

Rapid Response Activities

- **No Rapid Response or TAA Orientations have occurred this program year.**
- **WARN/Non-WARN Notices**

Region 8 had 12 employers who either filed a WARN Notice or made some type of public announcement. Of those 12 employers, 10 announced layoffs would occur, one (1) furloughed their employees and one (1) closed their business.

PY 20 Performance Support Grant (PSG) Outcomes

Initiative # 1 – Continuation of Current Customer Training Plans

35 customers have received funding on the pathway to graduate by May 2021. Over \$21,000 in financial assistance has been provided to these students as of September 30, 2020. Of the total students, 12 have graduated, 21 continue to attend and two (2) have dropped out. Of those who have graduated, all are employed earning between \$11.50 to \$33.00 an hour. The two (2) who have dropped out are currently experiencing health issues that prevent them from attending school or obtaining employment.

Initiative # 2 – Short-Term Training

Three (3) individuals have been funded from this initiative. All are currently attending training. Two (2) are in the process of starting a work experience at this time.

Initiative # 3 – Work-Based Learning for Adults

15 Participants have been provided with a work experience activity. Six (6) have successfully completed their work experience, three (3) have dropped out and six (6) are still participating. Of the nine (9) customers who have concluded their participation, four (4) are currently employed, three (3) are working with a Career Advisor towards employment, one (1) retired and one (1) is unable to be contacted.

Initiative # 4 – Supportive Services

20 customers have received supportive services. Of those individuals, 13 are currently attending training, 5 are employed and 2 are unemployed. Of the 5 employed, their salary ranges from \$9.30 to \$15.00 per hour. Of the two that are unemployed, one recently finished training and is seeking employment with the assistance of their Career Advisor. The other is working with Vocational Rehabilitation towards an employment goal.



- Region 8 JAG has developed a JAG Facebook page to share information and success stories for JAG students throughout the region. JAG staff would love to have more followers, please visit their page at: <https://www.facebook.com/region8jag/>.
- JAG has faced many challenges due to the pandemic. All Region 8 JAG schools have experienced closures and restrictions that have inhibited the JAG Specialists' ability to work with students. Currently all schools are receiving at least some in-person instruction each week. Specialists are focusing on building rapport with students in-person while they can!
- Several schools have had success in establishing work experience sites for their students, but we would like to have some additional options for them. Please let us know if you are interested in hosting a JAG student for a work-based learning activity.
- The Career Development Conference (CDC) will likely take place virtually this year. Please be on the lookout for specific information in the coming weeks. If possible, JAG Manager Jennifer Robinson would appreciate your participation in some capacity with the CDC events.



Next Level Jobs: Rapid Recovery Grant

As a part of the Indiana Governor's Workforce Cabinet (GWC) "Rapid Recovery for a Better Future" initiative, the Governor has dedicated funding available through the CARES Act to increase short-term training opportunities for more than 10,000 Hoosiers. Regional Workforce Boards were provided the opportunity to submit a proposal for funds to offer these training programs to individuals and employers in their regions. As a result, the current Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant program will be temporarily expanded through 12/31/20 in the following ways:

- Hoosiers with two and four-year degrees are eligible to receive short-term WRG training
- New certificates have been added to the current list of eligible programs
- Additional certificate programs have been approved based on meeting immediate, regional, and emerging workforce needs
- The funding cap per individual has been raised from \$5,500 to \$10,000

Region 8 has been awarded \$582,000 in Workforce Training funds to support training costs and required classroom supplies.

Region 8 is pleased to be one of the State's most successful regions in implementing the CARES Act funding. Since July 7th, Region 8 has obligated \$513,000 to provide tuition assistance to 161 customers.

The Employer Training Grant provides funding to help cover employer training costs associated with training new employees and/or incumbent workers who need specific skills to perform their job duties more effectively. The current Next Level Jobs Employer Training Grant will be temporarily expanded through 12/31/20 in the following ways:

- The maximum amount of funding available to an employer has been raised from \$50,000 to \$100,000
- \$5 million will be allocated specifically for Minority-, Women-, and Veteran-owned businesses

Region 8 was awarded \$944,000 for the Employer Training Grant funds to reimburse employers for training new employees and/or upskilling of incumbent workers. This grant has provided an opportunity for Business Services staff to develop partnerships with Women, Minority, and Veteran-Owned businesses. Region 8 Business Services staff continue to work with Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Partners, and other business organizations to assess the needs of local companies.

Region 8 anticipated serving approximately 17 employers with ETG funds, resulting in about 170 workers in the region being trained. Thus far, 33 companies have completed on-line applications for a potential obligation of approximately \$954,000 to train approximately 251 workers. Of the 19 companies who have been approved, seven (7) are Women, Minority or Veteran-Owned businesses.