



NORTHWEST WISCONSIN WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

A proud partner of the American **JobCenter** network

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2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Open for Business

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A

MESSAGE

FROM OUR CEO

2021 has been a rebuilding year for us and the communities we serve. The challenges of 2020 followed our communities and businesses as the calendar turned. However we recognize that it is time to “get back to business”.

In every challenge there is an opportunity and the pandemic resulted in us altering the way we do business. We have adopted a hybridized office and remote work system and have moved to a new office location with less overhead. Our team has significantly grown and more than doubled in size giving us the capacity to tackle new initiatives. Technology reigns supreme and our enrollment, referral, and internal processes have gone through a lean transformation. The evolution of our organization will only serve to strengthen the workforce system in Northwest Wisconsin.

This year, we partnered with many of our counterparts across the state to introduce two new programs to the region. The first program, the Collaboration of Wisconsin: Rural Investment in Community Healthcare (COW), will work in 17 counties to close the vast skills gap, reduce the number of open jobs, and addresses the double-digit projected job openings in the healthcare industry. The Pathways Home 2 project will focus on engaging individuals leaving incarceration by providing workforce services to them prior to release from a correctional facility. The ultimate goal is to assist incarcerated individuals transitioning back into their community and find them employment.

As we work with our communities to rebuild and reopen, we will continue to strategically pursue funding opportunities to increase resources within our region. An example of this is the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development’s Worker Advancement Initiative (WAI). Funding for WAI comes from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds from the U.S. Department of Treasury through the Wisconsin Department of Administration. The goal of WAI is to provide subsidized employment and skills training opportunities to participants.

To succeed in the new economy, we recognize we must place an increased emphasis on partnership and collaboration. Co-enrollment between programs will continue as a common theme as more initiatives come forward. As the convener of the workforce system, we look forward to continuing to review our processes and create ways to do more with less. We must measure what matters and what matters to us is success across the region.

We hope you enjoy our annual report that recaps just a glimpse of the work that has been done by us and our partners in the past year.

Mari Kay-Nabozny

Chief Executive Officer

OUR BOARD

OUR VISION

Northwest Wisconsin will have a system that employers, workers, job seekers, and taxpayers will value as the system of choice for their workforce development needs.

OUR MISSION

The Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board will create, and continue to improve, an innovative and quality strategic direction for the regional workforce development system.

2020-2021

- Judy Aspling, Center City Housing
- Mike Bebeau, Xcel Energy
- Kyle Bukovich, Northern Wisconsin Building & Construction Trades
- Andrew Donahue, Wisconsin SBDC at UW - Superior
- Thomas Draghi, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- LeRoy Forslund, Forslund Consultants
- Brad Gast, Northcentral Technical College
- Mic Isham, Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission
- James Kehoe, Jr., Kehoe Enterprises
- Dale Kelm, Birch Haven Senior Living
- Kelly Klein, Iron County Development Zone
- Mary McPhetridge, Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce
- Ashley Moore, Thrivent Financial
- Jeff Muse, Northwest Wisconsin CEP
- Brian Nelson, Ironworkers #512 Apprenticeship & Training
- Richard Nystrom, D & N Development
- Bambi Pattermann, Northwood Technical College
- Kristine Porter, Department of Workforce Development
- PC Rasmussen, Lakewoods Resort
- Cindy Rouzer, Spooner Health System
- Jennifer Shearer, Indianhead Community Action Agency
- MJ Sills, Unemployment Insurance
- Shannon Stade, Marquip Ward United
- Jack Wichita



MEET THE NWWIB TEAM



**MARI KAY-
NABOZNY**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER**

OUR STAFF VALUES

Communication: Clear, consistent, and thorough communication through an appropriate method with team members and stakeholders.

Efficiency: Effective use of our energy to attain measurable outcomes that lead to a positive impact.

Levity: Inject positive fun and humor into our everyday work for increased engagement.

Autonomy: Respect our unique qualities and be transparent about our capacity, needs, and mistakes to meet personal and professional expectations.



**MELISSA
RABSKA**

**DIRECTOR OF
OPERATIONS &
COMMUNICATIONS**



**SCOTT
SCHULTZ**

**DIRECTOR OF
INDUSTRY &
INNOVATION**



**DAWN
KNAPP**

**COW PROJECT
COORDINATOR**



**KRISTI
WAITS**

**DIRECTOR OF
SPECIAL PROJECTS**



**MATTHEW
FILIPEK**

**PATHWAYS HOME
2 RE-ENTRY
CAREER COACH**



**RYCE
DAVIS**

**PROGRAM
ASSISTANT**

CARING FOR THE UPCOMING WORKFORCE

Northwood Technical College Group Childcare Essentials

Recognizing a need for more childcare workers and providers, the Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board partnered with Northwood Technical College to develop a certificate program within their Early Childhood Education Pathway.

“[There is a] dire need for quality childcare so that families can go to work, employers can have employees ready to go and don't have to worry about what's going on with their children all day,” said Amy Pennington from Northwood Technical College.

The Group Child Care Essentials Pathway Certificate offered by Northwood Technical College is available online/on site and is ideal for individuals who want to work in a licensed group childcare center. Pathway certificates allow students to seamlessly continue their education to earn a technical diploma, associate degree, and beyond. The Group Childcare Essentials Certificate puts students who complete the training at a Level 7 on the Wisconsin Registry.



“This program has opened so many more doors for me. At this level I can go in and get a job at any state certified Wisconsin day care facility. I can also work in a Headstart program, and it's opened a lot of job opportunities for me.” – Heather Leitl, WIOA Adult Program Participant

MAKING YOU A SUCCESS

The Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board serves as a connector between the U.S. Department of Labor and local American Job Centers that deliver services to workers and employers. Our role is to develop regional strategic plans and set funding priorities for the area. Part of this role is oversight of the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) in our 10 county region of Northwest Wisconsin. Below and on the next page are success stories submitted by our WIOA service provider, Northwest Wisconsin CEP.

Together with our American Job Center Network, workforce, and economic development partners, programs, and services, we are dedicated to strengthening the Wisconsin workforce and connecting people to opportunities, whether you're a job seeker or business.



"I feel very blessed and fortunate to have the opportunity to work with the Northwest Wisconsin CEP [WIOA service provider] to have my CNA classes paid for because otherwise I wouldn't have been able to afford the classes through [Northcentral Technical College]. Having my CNA license has opened the door for new opportunities for me and has helped me financially," said Elizabeth, WIOA Adult Program Participant (Pictured left).

WORKFORCE INNOVATION & OPPORTUNITY ACT

What we do best

HANDS ON CDL TRAINING

In May 2021, Northwest Wisconsin CEP organized at Hands on CDL Training. Pictured is Karen, Hands on CDL Training instructor, and Ryan. Ryan had taken CDL Classroom training while in High School, but had a very difficult time passing the required written tests. The instructor worked with all five students on preparing for the written tests. Ryan was the only student to pass all three tests in one sitting. All of the other students passed as well and were able to move onto the behind the wheel component of the training.



ENTERING A NEW CAREER

Elizabeth Shomila contacted a Career Planner in May 2020. Elizabeth had spent the last couple of years working in retail as a cashier. Although she was comfortable and very good at it – she knew in her heart that she wanted more for herself and her family. Together, Elizabeth and the Career Planner discussed her interests and what the best options were for her. She was then enrolled into the WIOA Adult program to assist her with the costs of training.

With a plan in place, Elizabeth began training in a Certified Nursing Assistant program in early June 2020 and was set to complete in late July. Unfortunately, for unforeseen circumstances, Elizabeth was unable to complete training during that time frame. However, she was very determined to finish what she started and worked directly with her instructor and Northcentral Technical College to get her training extended and finished two months later than expected.

Because of COVID-19 precautions, state testing was very limited. Elizabeth was finally able to do her testing on October 26, 2020 where she successfully passed all written and skill requirements. She is currently now certified in Wisconsin. Elizabeth is now employed in her community at an assisted living facility and is earning \$3.00 more per hour than her original retail wages. The facility is completely locked down to the public so there are some challenges with that, lots of emotions with residents and additional protocols put in place. She is gaining valuable experience in entry-level healthcare that could likely propel her to Career Ladder in healthcare with confidence and experience which was her original goal.

WE HELP YOU FIND A PATHWAY HOME

In July 2021, the Department of Labor awarded \$3.8 million in federal grant funding to the Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board and their partners, including the NWWIB. The Wisconsin Pathways Home 2 Grant will provide workforce services to incarcerated individuals prior to release from a correctional facility to assist incarcerated individuals transitioning back into their community. The funding will help offenders who have been involved in the criminal justice system with re-entry, by providing valuable resources such as short-term training, certifications, job placement and case management, beginning 20-180 days prior to release. In Northwest Wisconsin, the NWWIB will receive \$472,000 over the three and half year grant period to serve 200 individuals across ten counties. Throughout the grant, partners will serve 800 individuals statewide.

WORKING WITH RETURNING CITIZENS

"I couldn't be happier about the Culinary [Academy] and the participation from inmates. This is an excellent step in helping to reduce recidivism and preparing inmates for a career upon their release from jail."

- Lt. Jeff Johnson, Jail & Court Services Administrator

At the end of September, eight inmates at the Sawyer County Jail successfully graduated from the Culinary Academy with the skills needed to succeed in the hospitality industry. The Culinary Academy was coordinated by the NWWIB and the Sawyer County Lac-Courte Oreilles Economic Development Corporation, in partnership with the Sawyer County Jail and Sawyer County Justice Programs. These organizations recognize the importance of providing workers for the hospitality industry and this is just one step in working to alleviate workforce needs.

Inmates graduated from the program with an average score of 93.23%, obtaining an American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institutes Kitchen Cook & Guest Service Gold - Tourism, ServSafe for Food Handlers, and RealCareer Work Readiness credentials. Upon re-entry into the workforce, participants in this program will be able to fully realize and utilize their newly earned skills with local employers.

OUR FUTURE WORKFORCE

INVESTING IN THE SUCCESS OF OUR COMMUNITIES

REGIONAL CAREER PATHWAYS



The NWWIB is part of our region's Regional Career Pathways consortium, the Great Northwest, which covers CESAs 10, 11, and 12. This consortium has been created with the purpose of continuing the work of Pathways Wisconsin and also includes Visions Northwest and Momentum West. The regional consortium adopts, implements, promotes, and monitors high school career pathways in high-skill, in-demand industry sectors. Together, through this work, partners convened 47 stakeholders, created 4 pathway maps, and engaged 84 school districts.

VIRTUAL CAREER DAYS



CESA 12 and the NWWIB partnered together and offered four virtual career day events for students in grades 6th-12th. Students explored labor market data, non-traditional career options, and listened to speakers who represent a wide range of careers within Northern Wisconsin. Industries represented included manufacturing, healthcare, business management, and construction. Over half a dozen school districts within the CESA 12 region participated.

WISCONSIN EXPRESS



The NWWIB and Northwest Wisconsin AHEC partnered on a new Wisconsin Express for college students. Wisconsin Express takes place all throughout the state with many different focuses. The focus of this Wisconsin Express was on healthcare entrepreneurialism in rural areas. Throughout the week, 20 students interacted with healthcare providers, who developed their own private practice, and students also develop their own "business plan" while receiving guidance from local and regional economic development professionals.



A FOCUS ON HEALTHCARE

INCREASING THE WORKFORCE TALENT POOL

WHAT OUR CLIENTS HAVE TO SAY

“You guys see me as a person, you’ve helped me see the possibilities in life outside my bubble. I can be real and know that I won’t be judged for my past,” said Felicia, Support to Communities participant. “You make me believe that I’m worth it, that I can do anything that I want, that’s so important to me.”

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES AND CARE PROVIDERS

Collaboration of Wisconsin: Rural Investment in Community Healthcare

In February 2021, the NWWIB was awarded a \$2.5 million federal grant under the H-1B Rural Healthcare Grant Program to address rural healthcare workforce shortages in Wisconsin communities. The NWWIB and its partners will work to expand, develop, and provide employment and training in direct-patient healthcare occupations. Numerous post-secondary and employer partnerships also will contribute to the grant success. The grant will serve nearly 400 healthcare workers in rural communities.

Support to Communities

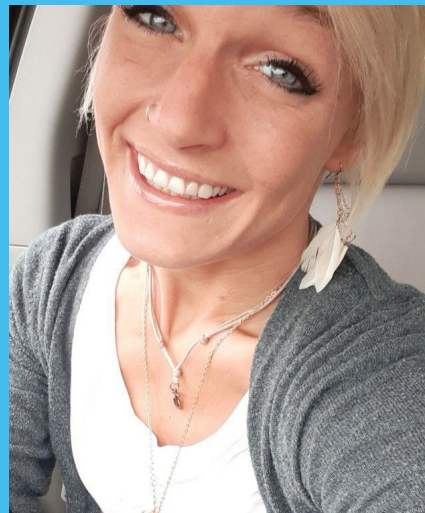
The Support to Communities Program is part of a state effort to combat the opioid crisis. The project is designed to assist workers who are or have been affected by opioid misuse or other substance disorder either personally or through family and friends. The program also assists individuals who are seeking to transition to professions that support individuals with a substance use disorder or occupations that address the opioid recovery efforts in the local area.

At the age of 20, Felicia Pokorny found herself in a tough spot: a growing dependency on substances. Over the course of the next 3 years, Felicia fell into a bad relationship that tested her strength as she began using Methamphetamines. After using for a few more years, and an additional bad relationship, Felicia found herself living in a women's shelter at the age of 26. After a slight reprieve from substance use, her efforts were thwarted by the tragic loss of her sister, causing recovery to be put on hold as Felicia coped with the loss.

On July 7, 2020, this changed. Felicia found the strength to stand up to substances and find recovery once again. This is the last day in which Felicia used a substance, and she is determined never to go back. Felicia has continued to make strides in her recovery and has enrolled in the Support to Communities program through the

COVID-19 Call Center Representative

To assist communities, individuals, and businesses within our region navigate the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, the NWWIB partnered with Northwest Wisconsin AHEC on a COVID-19 Call Center Representative position. This position was available to answer questions about scheduling a vaccination appointment, learning what vaccines are available in the region and directing individuals to local vaccination sites in the first part of 2021.



Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board. Through emotional support, care, and guidance on next steps to achieve her goals, Felicia has continued recovery, found happiness in a new job, and has invested in herself and three children. Through financial support from Support to Communities, Felicia began her next journey, as a student at Northcentral Technical College, pursuing a degree as a Substance Abuse Counselor.

Fall 2021 also presented another milestone in Felicia's recovery. In order to pursue a new position with her current employer that would pay \$1.50 more per hour and work with her school schedule, Felicia went before the Washburn County board and pled her case for the re-acquisition of her liquor license in the State of Wisconsin. She was successful and now has the opportunity to achieve another goal of family sustaining employment.

| 2021 in data and numbers

Program Year 2020 (July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021)

Title I Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Performance

Adult Measures

Qtr. 2 Unsubsidized Employ.	EXCEED
Qtr. 4 Unsubsidized Employ.	MET
Median Earnings	DID NOT MEET
Credential Attainment	EXCEED
Measurable Skill Gain	EXCEED

Dislocated Worker Measures

Qtr. 2 Unsubsidized Employ.	EXCEED
Qtr. 4 Unsubsidized Employ.	EXCEED
Median Earnings	EXCEED
Credential Attainment	EXCEED
Measurable Skill Gain	EXCEED

Youth Measures

Qtr. 2 Unsubsidized Employ. / Edu.	EXCEED	Median Earnings	DID NOT MEET
Qtr. 4 Unsubsidized Employ. / Edu.	EXCEED	Credential Attainment	UNMET
Measurable Skill Gain	EXCEED		

**WE HAVE IDEAS.
NO DOUBT ABOUT THIS!**

**WE ALWAYS PUSH
WHAT'S POSSIBLE**

**WE WORK WITH YOU.
ALL THE TIME**

OUR ORGANIZATION IN NUMBERS

7



WONDERFUL
PEOPLE WORKING
AS A TEAM

21



BEAUTIFUL
YEARS OF
ACHIEVEMENTS

16



PROGRAMS THAT
WE WORK WITH
EVERY DAY

6



AWARDED
PROJECTS OVER
TIME