

Efficient, Effective, Essential: WIA Puts Iowans Back to Work

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT IN OUR COMMUNITIES

The Workforce Investment Act, the largest single source of federal funding for workforce development activities, supports an **employment and training program**. Congress first passed WIA in 1998 to replace the Job Training Partnership Act. WIA provides training and employment services for low-income adults, low-income youth, and dislocated and unemployed individuals.

In Iowa, each of the state's 15 workforce development regions has a Regional Workforce Investment Board that selects a WIA provider agency. Iowa's regional WIA providers include community colleges, councils of governments, and a community action agency. Other nonprofit organizations provide WIA services for special populations. The Regional Workforce Investment Boards and WIA service providers facilitate the **local control of federal funds**.

MATCHMAKERS

WIA providers are matchmakers. **Their customers are both businesses and jobseekers**. They assess the needs of each and make matches by helping workers become compatible with employers – that is, by getting workers into training opportunities to gain the skills local employers need them to have.

It's a win-win for everyone: Jobseekers gain employment and the ability to support themselves and their families, and employers get the workforce they need to make their businesses successful. Investing in a skilled workforce is also **a win for the whole state: Businesses grow and strengthen Iowa's economy, and unemployed individuals become taxpayers** who no longer need assistance from social programs. WIA providers create a positive **return on investment** by focusing on self-sufficiency and sustainability, not short-term fixes.

SPECIALISTS AND PARTNERS

WIA providers specialize in helping at-risk, low-income individuals, including those who are the hardest to place because of lack of high school diploma or basic skills, offender status, disabilities, or multiple barriers. They engage in one-on-one interactions that extend into long-term planning for the jobseeker, beyond the initial interview or job application process. They partner with many local organizations to provide the support clients need to be successful.

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WIA provides avenues for people who need work to become employable in Iowa's high-demand, fastest-growing occupations: middle-skill jobs. (Middle-skill jobs require more than a high-school diploma but less than a four-year degree.) Iowa employers have jobs they cannot fill because jobseekers lack the right training. WIA services are crucial to **closing this skills gap** and **strengthening Iowa's economy**.

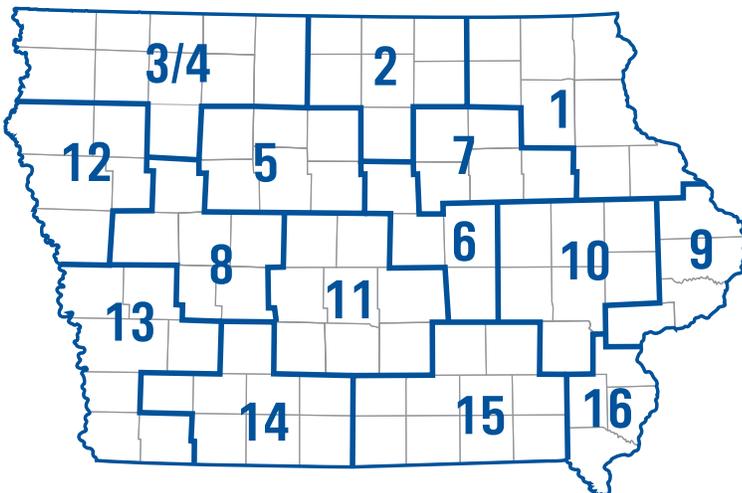
Federally funded WIA services complement state workforce services, and WIA providers partner with Iowa Workforce Development for efficient delivery. The Association of Iowa Workforce Partners, the organization of Iowa's WIA providers, shares with Iowa Workforce Development the goal of **improving the skills of Iowa's workforce**.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTINUING A SUCCESSFUL MODEL

- **Urge WIA Reauthorization**
Congress must **reauthorize WIA**. WIA authorization expired in 2003, and has been up for reauthorization since then, including this year. These federal funds are crucial for economic growth and building a skilled workforce in Iowa.
- **Maintain Regions for Local Decision-Making**
The existing workforce regions in Iowa must be maintained. Each of the 15 regions is **critical to meeting local needs**. Each region's industries and workforce are unique, so local decision-making ensures the **most effective and efficient use of resources**. Through a customer service plan, each WIA provider assesses their region's needs (the skills employers need and the training jobseekers need to acquire those skills) and creates a **customized approach** to meeting those needs.
- **Continue Partnerships**
Partnerships among different workforce service providers, other organizations serving low-income and unemployed Iowans, and employers must be continued. WIA providers have **long-standing partnerships** in their local regions. Collaboration results in better performance and more success for customers (both jobseekers and businesses). In addition, **links between workforce agencies and community colleges for training are critical** to serving jobseekers and employers. Iowa should strengthen those partnerships at the regional level.

Workforce Investment Act service providers are essential partners in building a skilled workforce and strengthening Iowa's economy.

Workforce Development Regions



ABOUT AIWP

The Association of Iowa Workforce Partners (AIWP) is a statewide organization of regional Workforce Investment Act partners that provide specialized workforce services to Iowans, including hard-to-place, at-risk, low-income adults, low-income youth, and dislocated and unemployed individuals. The mission of AIWP is to advance the quality and availability of workforce services in Iowa through education, advocacy, and professional development. AIWP members efficiently serve both jobseekers and employers through a regional system, matching Iowans with training and skills to meet the unique needs of local employers.