

WDI - 34 Years of Notable Accomplishments - 1985 to 2019

Accomplishments

- WDI/PIC has placed over 60,000 adults in living wage careers, and another 37,000 public assistance recipients in transitional jobs – while helping some 15,000 youth gain employment and work maturity skills over the past 34 years. It is estimated that over **20% of the workforce in SE MN has touched our services.**
- WDI/PIC attracted some **\$190 million in funding**, from Federal, State, County and private sources since 1985.
- When you calculate the new taxes paid on earnings for just 1 year by those placed, and add to it the amount of welfare avoided by getting a job for 1 year, it amounts to over **\$1 billion returned to government** over the last 34 years! Dividing the return by the total cost of operation it yields a whopping **554% average Return on Investment!**
- As a non-profit organization, the agency has passed unqualified financial audits for a remarkable 34 years in a row.
- Routinely met or exceeded all of the standard federal outcome measures for the year – currently the only local Workforce Development Board in Minnesota to do so for the past 2 years under the new WIOA measures!
- The agency was awarded the Theo. Small Award from NAPIC in 1998 as the best Workforce Board in the nation; awarded the Best Rural Workforce Development system in the nation by NWA in 2007; and, was given a national Award of Excellence by NAWB in 2014.
- For the fourth year in a row, WDI was recognized by the Minneapolis Star Tribune as one of the 'TOP 100' non-profits in the State; WDI also qualified as one of the 'Best Places to Work' for the 9th year in a row.
- Regularly served to shape federal workforce policy at the national level through the US Conference of Mayors Workforce Development Council, the President's Commission on the New Economy, a White House summit, and giving testimony to the U.S. Congress.

Significant Project Developments from the Past

- Established a network of services for each and every county in our region, and developed the contracts and plans to provide employment and training services to public assistance recipients throughout the region.
- Successfully attracted a unique \$2 million federal dislocated worker grant in 1985 to assist the striking Hormel workers in the Austin area, helping to heal and transition the community.
- Pioneered the collaboration and co-location of partners in one-stop centers in SE MN.
- Offered 1-month residential summer camps for disadvantaged youth in the 90's known as Campus Connections – these were held at SE MN college campuses, helping to remediate academic deficiencies and build work maturity skills.
- Collaborated with the Rochester School District in the 90's to create a new, student-led alternative school known as the Rochester Off Campus (ROC), and then spun it off.
- In the late 90's, worked with the McKnight Foundation to create innovative programming for TANF recipients, including an auto repair and loan program, and a work-based mentorship program.

- Worked with IBM from 2000 to 2010 to help develop voice-activated software to teach English and workplace skills to ESL students – and for another 6 years served as the international help desk to the IBM Foundation product, supporting some 200 sites in 55 different countries.
- Responded to the terrific flood of 2007 in the Rushford area, putting unemployed people to work repairing the damage to public lands – later did the same with the flood in Zumbro Falls.
- Answered the call for a variety of innovative training initiatives in order to help the region recover from the Great Recession of 2008 – 2010.
- Helped author MN legislation to recognize the State’s current workforce system.
- Persisted for 12 years in finally getting the legislature to approve an \$8.1 million bond to build the current Rochester Workforce Center – still the only co-located Center on a MN State College campus that was new construction, uniquely dedicated to a Workforce Center.
- Established a local requirement that all Career Planners are certified as GCDF, and offered training and Merit-Based incentives for quality performance – unusual in this industry – the result is an exemplary staff of professionals dedicated to excellence!

Current Developments

- The agency has developed a model Career Pathways delivery system for the region, developing pre-apprenticeship academies for the Carpentry, Laborer’s, Cement Finishers, and Operating Engineers construction careers – as well as pathways programs for the Public sector and Manufacturing ; these add to the nationally acclaimed Bridges to Healthcare career pathways program in Rochester, which was named by the Harvard School of Business in 2017 as one of the best innovations in government.
- Assisted in the development and support of taskforces that serve jobseekers and employers related to: those with disabilities (Maxability), veterans (Salute Southern MN), ex-offenders, minorities, and women in non-traditional careers.
- Offering pre-employment, manufacturing training to inmates within the jails at 4 county detention centers, in partnership with SE Technical College and ABE.
- Working with at risk foster youth to ensure successful transition from school and avoid homelessness.
- Successfully attracted a \$2.5 million national competitive grant through DOL, called the RETAIN grant, which links WDI with Mayo Clinic Rehab to improve the Worker’s Comp system; MN is just one of eight states in the demonstration project currently underway.
- Developed and hosted a shared business liaison position for the Rochester Area, in collaboration with the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce and the Southeast Service Coop – the first arrangement of its kind in the State
- Graduated 3 Apprentices from our MIS Specialist program – unique in the State.
- Currently pursuing funding to respond to the current Farm Crisis, and assist farmers with finding supplemental employment and start new business ventures.