GET CONNECTED

Dedicated to the Workforce in Boone, Stephenson and Winnebago Counties

2020 ANNUAL SUMMARY
July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

THEWORKFORCECONNECTION.ORG

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSOR:
The Workforce Connection is committed to providing a workforce that meets the needs of the business community now and in the future.

Provide a fully integrated and accessible workforce development system that balances the needs of individuals and businesses to ensure our region has a skilled workforce to effectively compete in the global economy.

As we look back over the past year it is amazing how The Workforce Connection (TWC) has evolved into a more agile organization. Yet, there is much more work to be done. Staying focused on our dual mandate to meet the needs of individuals and employers is our number one priority.

Under Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones’ leadership working with all stakeholders, we continue to enhance the TWC brand locally, and at the state and national level.

The Kellogg Foundation 2030 Racial Equity Grant is a great example of what can be accomplished when the local area stakeholders work together to secure non-WIOA funding for our area to tap into the hidden potential in our talent pool. The grant is $2 million per year for ten years, and we are still in the running as a finalist.

Demonstrating TWC’s leadership, the unveiling of our Equity Statement this year will provide an example for area companies and organizations. To move the needle and improve equity throughout our area, and really live up to TWC’s tagline “Get Connected!”, it will take engagement and commitment from employers, all stakeholders, and individuals.

Thank you to everyone that worked with us in 2020. We look forward to continuing working with you in 2021 and beyond.

This past year adds to an extended period of adjusting. There’s been nearly a year and a half of adapting to one thing after another. Routines and habits have long since gone away as we have come to terms with our current reality of not having answers for quite a bit. We are in a constant state of not knowing and for many of us, this is our first global pandemic and there was no way to know it would go on for this long. As our economic conditions continue to evolve, we’ve learned a lesson for life, so much is out of our hands. The one thing that’s constant is change and there was no way to foreshadow the degree of change we’re experiencing.

As we think about creating new ways of being and doing in a post-COVID economy, we should focus on what we can control and be willing to let the rest of it go! After all, we have no way of knowing what’s going to change next.
OUR BOARD
SERVING JULY 1, 2020 TO JUNE 30, 2021

OFFICERS
Chair
Frank Rotello, CEO
Alpha Controls & Services LLC

Vice Chair
Michelle Cassaro,
Chief Financial Officer
Chicago Rockford International Airport

Secretary/Treasurer
Amy M. Ott, President
Boylan Catholic High School

Immediate Past Chair
Karen Brown,
Director, Human Resources
Highland Community College

CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIALS
Chair
Mayor Thomas P. McNamara
City of Rockford

Chairman Joe Chiarelli
Winnebago County

Chairman Karl Johnson
Boone County

Chairman William Hadley
Stephenson County

BOARD MEMBERS
Mark Adams, Store Manager
Countryside Markets

Ben Bernsten, President
Goodwill Industries of Northern Illinois

Kathy Crandall,
Human Resources/Owner
Crandall Stats and Sensors

Scott Bloomquist, Superintendent
Boone/Winnebago Regional
Office of Education

Nathan Bryant, President & CEO
Rockford Area Economic Development Council

Todd Cagnoni, City Administrator
City of Rockford

Len Carter, Chief Human Resources Officer
FHN

Fred Delarosa, General Manager
Embassy Suites Rockford Riverfront

Pamela Lopez-Fettes,
Executive Director
Growth Dimensions of Belvidere and Boone County

Suzanne K. Fischer, Vice President
OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center

Einar Forsman, President & CEO
Rockford Chamber of Commerce

Alan Golden, President
Northwestern Illinois Building & Construction Trades

Dr. Daniel Grohens,
Rehab. Services Supervisor
IL DHS – Div. of Rehabilitation Services

Jerry Guinane,
VP of Human Resources
SwedishAmerican Health System

Bob Guirl, Community Member

Geri-Dee Hayden, Vice President
Commercial Banking, First National Bank

Angela Hite-Carter,
Executive Director
Student Service & Alternative Learning
Rockford Public Schools #205

Greg Harle, Training Director
Plumbers & Pipefitters LU 23

Vanessa Hughes, President
Hughes Resources

Dr. Howard Spearman, President
Rock Valley College

Paul Logli, CEO
United Way of Rock River Valley

James Pirages, Attorney at Law
Hinshaw & Culbertson

Jordan Priest, President
617 Enterprises

Kraig Reichwald,
VP of Manufacturing
Custom Metal Products

Craig Steege, Campus Director
Rasmussen College

Mark Stefanic, Director of Projects
Supply Core

Dr. Rudy Valdez, Project Manager
Kaney Aerospace

Mark Williams, Executive Director
Greater Freeport Partnership

Ed Wood, VP of Human Resources
Berner Food & Beverage

Jeff Zeal, Local Office Manager
Illinois Department of Employment Security

BOARD STAFF
Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones,
Executive Director

Chris Connors, Planning & Quality Assurance Manager

Cathy Cornelius, Board Assistant

Mike Johnson, Grant Compliance Specialist & EO Officer

Robert Jones Jr.,
Business Account Manager

Amanda Sink,
Strategic Initiatives Manager

Dan White, Fiscal Manager
GET CONNECTED

Your local workforce board serving Boone, Stephenson, and Winnebago counties

CONSTRUCTION
HEALTHCARE & SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
HOSPITALITY & TOURISM
MANUFACTURING
PROFESSIONAL & BUSINESS SERVICES
TRANSPORTATION, DISTRIBUTION, AND WAREHOUSING

SUPPLY
Career-Seekers
People with different levels of education, skills, and experience.

DEMAND
Businesses
With talent needs.

PATHWAYS TO CAREERS COMMITTEE
Uses labor market information to link training programs with regional in-demand job opportunities.

OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Coordinates the workforce development system with all partner programs to serve diverse populations.

YOUTH COUNCIL COMMITTEE
Develops strategies to connect education and career opportunities for youth and young adults.

EMPLOYER & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Works with business and economic development groups to increase employer engagement in regional workforce development.

PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE
Identifies metrics to measure effectiveness of The Workforce Connection’s efforts, partnerships, and programs.
# CONNECTING TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDING

## BUSINESS DONATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Name</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpha Controls &amp; Services, LLC</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## ORGANIZATIONAL GRANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Way of Northwest Illinois (Healing Illinois Funds)</td>
<td>$3,100</td>
<td>Facilitated virtual employer forums in each of our counties to discuss diversity, equity, and inclusion for the region’s workforce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First National Bank</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>Advancing digital literacy for English language learners in Boone County with a bilingual kiosk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Foundation Grant</td>
<td>$18,600</td>
<td>Technology to complete education and/or obtain employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Integration Grant (DCEO)</td>
<td>$65,000</td>
<td>Connecting customers to resources through partner referrals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship Navigator Grant (DCEO)</td>
<td>$126,000</td>
<td>Providing guidance for employers about the benefits of apprenticeships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislocated Worker Grant for COVID-19 (DCEO)</td>
<td>$627,000</td>
<td>Additional resources provide further resources for the training and upskilling of individuals laid off due to the pandemic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS

$854,700

## DONATIONS

### YOUR DONATIONS HELP US TO:

- Prepare Illinois workers for a career, not just their next job
- Ensure equitable access for all
- Provide relevant and up-to-date workforce trends and data
- Connect career-seekers with regional employers
- Conduct workforce-related research for our region

To donate visit: theworkforceconnection.org/donate

- $10,000 COULD TRAIN ONE APPRENTICE IN HEALTHCARE, MANUFACTURING, OR LOGISTICS
- $2,500 COULD PROVIDE A 3-PART HR TRAINING SERIES TO APPROXIMATELY 50 EMPLOYERS
- $300 COULD PROVIDE A CHROMEBOOK TO A PARTICIPANT FOR EDUCATION OR WORK-RELATED TRAINING
CONNECTING TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT

**OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS TRAINING**
Total: $1,479,541

- Health Care and Social Assistance / $522,106
- Transportation and Warehousing / $456,508
- Manufacturing / $278,017
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services / $137,329
- Construction / $66,956
- Other Services / $7,150
- Educational Services / $6,625
- Retail Trade / $4,850

**ON-THE-JOB TRAINING**
Total: $247,054

- Manufacturing / $117,338
- Construction / $82,452
- Health Care and Social Assistance / $18,353
- Transportation and Warehousing / $16,580
- Administrative and Support Services / $7,873
- Public Administration / $4,458

**WORK EXPERIENCE**
Total: $263,543

- Health Care and Social Assistance / $108,451
- Transportation and Warehousing / $60,673
- Hospitality and Service / $39,316
- Manufacturing / $36,127
- Administrative and Support Services / $11,595
- Construction and Facilities / $7,381
INCUMBENT WORKER DOLLARS

$155,409

SPENT WITH EMPLOYERS TO UPSKILL THEIR CURRENT WORKFORCE

Average Hourly Wage of
REGISTERED NURSES
Exited During PY 2020:

$30.07 or $62,546 Yearly

Average Hourly Wage of
CDL DRIVERS
Exited During PY 2020:

$23.83 or $49,566 Yearly

“We just didn’t have the skills we need to continue on our growth curve, so this [service by The Workforce Connection] helps us do that. By investing in [upskilling current talent with the changes to automation], we’re able to be more efficient, more effective, and our growth curve then becomes more stable.”

Lori G.
The Caldwell Group

2022 WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYMPOSIUM
Thursday, April 28, 2022

Sponsorship opportunities available!
asink@theworkforceconnection.org
ACHIEVING REGIONAL WORKFORCE GOALS

Advancing Digital Literacy and Providing Equitable Opportunities
The Workforce Connection (TWC) recognized this large gap in our region’s community and set out to find a solution. With generous support from the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois (CFNIL), TWC was able to acquire a number of Chromebooks to provide to enrolled participants in the workforce system, giving them equitable opportunities for success.

Deepening Employer Engagement
The Workforce Connection has been able to address the workforce needs of over 680 employers in the region between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 by providing training to their current talent, developing apprenticeships, providing work experience staff, hosting hiring events on behalf of the company(s), and assessing talent through WorkKeys.

Employment Recovery
The Office of Governor Pritzker held a press conference at The Workforce Connection (TWC) to announce a $627,000 Employment Recovery Grant that The Workforce Connection Board received to serve dislocated workers impacted by COVID-19. This grant allows TWC to provide training, career services, and work-based learning to laid-off workers so they can obtain new employment in our region.

Building the Business Case for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)
Through a grant provided from the Healing Illinois Initiative by United Way Northwest Illinois, TWC held three employer forum sessions to connect employers with what it means to be diverse and inclusive in the workplace and how DEI can impact a business. These sessions serviced over 60 employers across the region.

The Work Continues…
The Workforce Connection leads the effort in partnership with the City of Rockford, County of Winnebago, Transform Rockford, Region 1 Planning Council, and Rockford Public Schools 205, and is a finalist for the Racial Equity 2030 grant for the proposal on Disrupting Racial Inequality through Co-Navigating Systems. The Racial Equity 2030 grant would award $20 million dollars to close the racial equity gap in our region.
ILLINOIS WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP (IWP) AWARD WINNERS

**Individual Award:** Savhanna Waffle has obtained certificates in the following areas: GED program, Career Readiness, Customer Service, and completed a WEX through the Elevate Program. She also began the Welding program at First Institute in August 2020 and was been offered a position at Enterprise. Savhanna also speaks of the administrative skills she has obtained working in the Career Center and how she can apply that in an office setting if needed. She is currently looking forward a career in welding.

Savhanna indicated that if not for these opportunities her options would be limited. She has persevered and was dedicated in completing all steps in the programs offered with the confidence and encouragement she found with the support from The Workforce Connection and its Elevate team.

**Business Award:** FHN utilized Incumbent Worker Training Funding provided by The Workforce Connection to train their emergency staff to prepare for the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Additionally, FHN has been a leading employer advocate for apprenticeships, serving as a panelist for The Workforce Connection’s Apprenticeship Panel in February 2020 to share their experience and passion for investing in their people through a Certified Medical Assistant (CMA) apprenticeship.

**Innovative Award:** Industrial Maintenance Accelerated Program (IMAP) Project which included Nuestro Queso, Anchor Harvey and Dan Foss to up-skill current staff in order to meet the maintenance technician needs for all three employers.

“**The work you and your team do every day touches thousands of lives and is really making a difference in our community and in their families.**”

*Mayor Tom McNamara*  
*City of Rockford*

“We at DFA reached out to The Workforce Connection team so that we could offer our employees training that they would not have had the opportunity without assistance. Our facility had identified a need for training that was not financially feasible at this time, but was imperative to our operations.

The Workforce Connection was able to walk us through what our options were, how they could best serve our facility, and how to move forward. Already we are seeing the benefits in a safer environment, team morale as we are reinvesting in them, and more production line uptime. It has been a great experience and we are thankful.”

*Brian V.*  
*Dairy Farmers of America*