



Iowa Sector Connect – Business & Financial Services Group Call Notes

Dial-In Number: 1-866-685-1580, Conference Code: 5152813866

Wednesday, February 14th 8:30 AM – 9:30 AM

Purpose: Opportunity for Business and Financial Services sector partnership teams from across the state to network and share updates about their programs, offer recommendations/best practices, and ask questions of one another so that each program continues to grow and thrive.

Attendance: DeKoté Curtin (NICC), Mary Jo Goodman (NICC), Judy Stoffel (KCCC), Jolene Rogers (ILCC), Sue Gibbons (IDOE), Joe Collins (IDOE).

Team/Program Updates

Northeast Iowa – Next meeting is planned for April. Mary Jo has been working closely with the Waukon community schools to find ways to better engage with youth. The group is working on forming action plans, one of which centers on better engagement with CTE/Vocational teachers in their area. Hope to use employers to better validate what is being taught in the class room and identify necessary/desirable skills for the future workforce. Local schools utilize Career Learning Link for much of their career testing and planning. An online program can only offer so much, however, and she strongly recommends students engage in a job shadow or other in-person activity to learn more about specific careers. Has found that around 80% of the students change their minds about career choices after participating in such activities.

Hoping to do more to train students on financial literacy and what to expect once they graduate and begin living on their own. Has found that students have a pretty unrealistic expectation about how much things cost and how much debt they can incur to pursue an education. They have had luck running a “Reality 101” event each year with local high school seniors that acts as a simulation for life as an adult. Depending on their career choice, they are given a certain amount of money and must work with landlords, hospitals, police department, and other service providers on a number of different issues that can arise as an adult. The goal is to leave the simulation with some money and not have to borrow from a bank or other source. Many students leave the simulation with a new view of how their career choice will impact their lifestyle choices. Mary Jo wants to expand it to involve Juniors to help begin planning earlier in high school.

Mary Jo worked to help establish a local 501c(3) called Partners in Vocational Education to help raise funds to support CTE/Vocational education programs. The group has helped to pay for things like laptops, plasma cutters, and different types of software to address sector-specific needs. Teachers interested in utilizing funds must fill out an application and a committee votes to approve/deny projects.

- Joe asked if Mary Jo had ever heard of using Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) funds for sector partnership work. Joe heard about this strategy at a conference and there was a corresponding [article](#) from the Dallas and Kansas City Federal Reserve Banks. Mary Jo thought this would likely work in Iowa, but hasn't seen any applications come through for her area yet.

Iowa Lakes – Does not currently have a Business & Financial Services sector board. Through some of their other employer relationships and the Department of Education Intermediary Network, however, they began offering a similar real world simulation for students called the “Game of Life” in 2016. Participants are randomly assigned a credit score and must work their way through a series of random events, such as car accidents, injuries, and legal issues. Other aspects of the game involve helping students better understand how much things cost (similar to the Price is Right game show) and how career choices will impact their lifestyle and cost of living (similar to Family Feud game show).

Kirkwood – The Board is currently working in three areas:

The 1st area of focus is with developing job seekers/candidates for this industry. The board is working with an area high schools’ BlendED education program, which is competency based and allows students to work independently and develop competencies at their own pace. A team of teachers support students in making progress. This model includes students receiving individual support/instruction as well as group instruction that the instructors refer to as “seminars”. Employers like this model in that the students are practicing the skill of taking initiative to learn to become competent in the subject matter. The students completed some career interest assessments using the Kuder Navigator system. Now that the board has information on areas of interest from the students, they are working to develop an interactive activity that can help students get exposure to the in-demand career opportunities within the Financial Service Sector through a seminar. The goal is to develop the interactive activity to accommodate a brief-short exchange and opportunities as long as a seminar (60 minutes) so that any business on the board can use the content when an opportunity exists to promote careers in the industry.

The 2nd area of focus deals with increasing the visibility and awareness of the industry. The board just wrapped up the development of a video that showcases local professionals in various roles within the industry. Each professional speaks to how the foundation of customer service skills propelled them into the roles they are in today. The board is fine-tuning the call to action at the end of the video; however there overall intent is to drive viewers to search job opportunities and/or training options to be competitive in the job market.

On a related note, more businesses are expressing the need for candidates to have sales skills in addition to customer service skills. An increasing number of insurance businesses are expressing a need for candidates to have entry level insurance licensing. The board will be exploring registered apprenticeships to see if this is an option for the industry. The board will lean on the expertise of staff at IowaWORKS to help them explore its viability. The local IWD staff has been offering a lot of employer training and support for RA’s. (Greer Sisson is the DOL RA State Director and a great resource at 515-284-4690, Sisson.Greer@dol.gov)

- Sue Gibbons worked with Central Iowa Works to develop a Financial Services Academy in the past that helped at-risk students learn foundational skills to enter this industry, such as customer service and soft skills. Sue was going to gather more information to share with the group that might be good to replicate.
- Joe has heard this request from many employers and has heard about some success through programs like Project Beacon, which is an internship with Des Moines North High School and Wellmark. Students learn about working in financial services, as well as dealing with company policies, politics, and behavior expectations in a corporate environment. The IDOE is working to hire someone in a new role to expand work based learning models and make it easier for employers/schools to “plug and play” successful models from around the state and in various industries.

The 3rd area of focus for the board is networking. They are implementing strategies to learn about each other’s hiring needs so each employer is able to refer job candidates to one another, specifically if a good candidate, but doesn’t meet one member’s specific needs. Would rather keep them in the industry within a specific region vs. losing to another area or industry.

Similar to other groups, the local Workforce Intermediary Network leads the development and implementation of work-based learning experiences. Activities range from Middle School to High School students.

General/State/Misc Updates

Career Pathways Project: The IDOE is planning to partner with Elevate Advanced Manufacturing, the Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI), and Advanced Manufacturing sector partnerships to develop an in-depth view of the careers in Manufacturing, to include career pathways, occupation profiles, and industry outlook. This work will be similar to those produced for the IT and Energy/Utilities industries in 2017. An employer survey will be opened in mid-February, in-person focus groups will be scheduled around the state in March/April, a final employer survey will be sent in May, and the final product will be unveiled at ABI's *Taking Care of Business Conference* in Coralville on June 5th. A similar project in Health Care is planned to run April-September 2018.

Facilitator Training Program: The IDOE is designing a 2-day training "boot camp" for sector partnership teams to begin in March/April. The 1st day will be open to anyone interested in sector partnerships within an area (employers, support partners, staff, etc...) and cover topics such as sector partnership history, national/local examples, and best practices. The 2nd day will be specific for facilitators and include topics such as facilitation skills, project management, and marketing/outreach strategies. Training to be offered around the state, often corresponding with focus group locations determined for the career pathway project. Joe will be sending a survey to facilitators to gauge interest in specific topics soon.

Industry Association/Subject Matter Expert: Did we want to include a business or financial services association on these calls to help provide industry trends, new resources, etc....as a subject matter expert? Some of the other group calls have outside groups join to add some perspective from an employer standpoint. Possibly the Iowa Bankers Association?

2018 Call Schedule

*All calls are scheduled for 8:30 AM – 9:30 AM, unless otherwise noted

2018 - 02/14, 04/12, 06/14, 08/09, 10/11, 12/06