



Western Iowa
advantage
a good thing growing

2007 ANNUAL REPORT



QUALITY OF LIFE
 MANUFACTURING
 BIOSCIENCES
 RENEWABLE ENERGY

All Arrows Point to Western Iowa Advantage

Western Iowa Advantage is a collaborative effort of economic development officials in Adair, Audubon, Carroll, Crawford, Greene, Guthrie, Ida and Sac Counties. The objectives of the organization are to embrace, leverage and promote the strengths of the region, which are quality of life, manufacturing, biosciences, and renewable energy.

Western Iowa Advantage has had many successes since being organized in 2005. This report details some of the more significant accomplishments of the organization and its partners in 2007.



Exploring New Ways to Attract Business Investment in 2007

The competition to lure new business is always fierce. The alignment of eight counties comprising Western Iowa Advantage (WIAD) was an attempt to bridge the gap between larger, better funded organizations, and our individual counties through cooperative partnerships. WIAD participated in several business recruitment efforts in 2007 that might not have been possible without the collaboration of the counties.

Community Venture Network (CVN). CVN, which WIAD joined in 2007, gives member organizations the exclusive right to hear presentations from upstart companies looking for a place to locate, which is usually in the Midwest. These presentations take place in Minneapolis and Chicago, and WIAD members attended several of these last year. At each event, 4-6 businesses make their "selling pitch" to economic development groups in attendance.

Sell Iowa Trip. The Iowa Department of Economic Development organizes several trips each year to different parts of the U.S. to visit companies that have a presence in Iowa. These trips also allow state economic development staff to make the state's pitch to companies that might consider making an investing in Iowa.

Jason White with the Midwest Partnership Corporation (serving Adair, Guthrie and Greene counties) attended the Minneapolis trip. Companies in the Western Iowa Advantage region that have a headquarter presence in the Minneapolis region include Cargill, Cardinal Glass, and Syngenta. A total of 34 representatives from 18 Minnesota companies attended the Iowa luncheon with Governor Chet Culver.

Don Luensmann with the Crawford Chamber and Development Council attended the Sell Iowa Trip in the Kansas City region. Farmland, the Western Iowa Advantage region's largest employer, is located in the Kansas City region. A total of 17 businesses were visited over four days.

The Iowa DED and Western Iowa Advantage delegation was able to determine any potential growth/expansions/relocations in Iowa. They also studied the existing needs for any Iowa operations of these companies to improve their performance.

TRADE SHOWS

The **Omaha Products Show** was held September 19-20 at the Qwest Center in Omaha. Iowa Area Development Group exhibited at this bi-annual event. WIAD joined IADG staff for the two-day show that targets primarily the Midwest regional market in a variety of manufacturing sectors. This is a good show to give WIAD exposure in a market that's close to home.

WIAD exhibited with MidAmerican Energy at **National Manufacturing Week**, September 25-27, 2007 in Chicago. Hundreds of thousands of attendees saw more than 2,000 exhibitors at the nation's largest advanced design and manufacturing event. Interest in Iowa, MidAmerican service territory was weighted heavily to Eastern Iowa so WIAD's participation was important to promote recognition of the region.

The bi-annual **International Food Expo** in Chicago saw over 22,000 exhibitors, presenters and show attendees from October 23-26, 2007. In cooperation with the Iowa Department of Economic Development and Iowa Area Development Group, WIAD gained wide exposure to companies from across the United States as well as South America, Asia and Europe. Participation as an exhibitor at the Food Expo gave the wide-ranging audience a glimpse of the opportunities of doing business in western Iowa.

THE IOWA CAREER CONSORTIUM

The **Iowa Careers Consortium** (ICC) is a public-private partnership created to meet Iowa's need for highly skilled employees. The Consortium includes Iowa businesses, communities, educational institutions, professional associations, the Iowa Department of Economic Development and Iowa Workforce Development. ICC's mission is to attract qualified, skilled workers to Iowa by raising the awareness of the progressive, innovative businesses that are creating quality career opportunities. Combined with the excellent quality of living Iowans are able to achieve a balanced lifestyle. The ICC incorporates several marketing strategies to help achieve this mission. Some of these include:

- **Generation Iowa** [www.generationiowa.com], recruitment trips to areas with a high concentration of Iowa alumni or targeted skilled workers, national and in-state public relations, participation in special events and career fairs, and development of collateral materials.
- The cornerstone of the marketing program is **SmartCareerMove.com**, a resource for job seekers to find job postings and information about Iowa and its communities.



Website Receives Award

Western Iowa Advantage, along with its marketing agency the Integer Group, won the Best Interactive Program NOVA Award from the American Marketing Association (AMA) Iowa Chapter in 2007. The award was in honor of the WIAD website, www.westerniowaadvantage.com, a one-stop-shop for business and workforce development to share the advantages the Western Iowa Advantage region has to offer. An e-newsletter, database of events and attractions, business listings, testimonials, fact sheets, research data on workforce, and maps are just some of the key features of the site. WIAD launched the website in June, 2006. The AMA Iowa Chapter sponsors the NOVA awards program to recognize excellence in marketing.

The Importance of Available Site Listings

It is extremely important that sites and buildings throughout the region that are available for new business prospects are easy for those prospects to find and research. Western Iowa Advantage uses several site listing tools that are well known and available.

LOIS. Officially known as the Location One Information System, LOIS is a national network of information which includes all incorporated communities in Iowa. The Western Iowa Advantage Development group has entered all types of information into this system to enable site selectors, potential business prospects, utilities, and the Iowa Department of Economic Development to easily obtain information regarding our individual communities, counties and region.

All communities with marketable assets of sites and buildings have community data up-to-date and is available as a printable community flier for the person seeking the data. To find information on any of our communities, go to www.westerniowaadvantage.com web site and scroll to the bottom of the home page and click on the blue bar "Search LOIS for available sites and buildings."

FastFacility™. Western Iowa Advantage partners list available properties with FastFacility™, an innovative, GIS-driven database site search tool designed to be used by expanding companies, consultants and other prospects who are seeking available buildings and/or sites. This state-of-the-art database allows prospects to complete site searches that will locate selected properties in seconds that match their exact project criteria. Since October, 2005, more than 2,000 visitors to Fast Facility have viewed properties listed in the Western Iowa Advantage region.



WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT

Workforce availability is a key concern for existing and potential new employers in the region. Western Iowa Advantage has taken several steps to identify workforce issues specific to the region and is implementing several key initiatives.

Piloted an **Online Workforce Needs Assessment Survey** for the region that will be replicated throughout the state. This survey will:

- Identify number and required qualifications of open positions of regional employers.
- Identify training needs of existing and future companies.
- Enable targeted recruitment efforts, providing local developers with knowledge to drill down to core problems in labor force needs.

Encourage posting to **IWD's online Job Bank** (www.iowajobs.org)

- Link to jobs bank from WIAD website and partner sites.
- Identify employment opportunities in the region and promote to potential workers.
- Reach out to employers through a regular email and direct mail campaign to encourage the posting of open positions
- Each WIAD partner county has a specific URL that displays open positions in their laborshed.

Alumni Recruitment, which involves sending letters and informational packets to organizers of class reunions and town festivals throughout the region offering materials to be displayed at the event that encourages people to look in the region for employment and quality of life.



A series of **four postcards** (2 of which are shown here) promoting the advantages of living and working in Western Iowa are distributed to residents and businesses. The goal is to have those who migrated out of state

receive a personal note from individuals in the region promoting the advantages of the region and inviting them back to live and work.

A series of **testimonials** are available on the WIAD website and in print form. These are powerful messages from current residents and businesses that have made the decision to locate in the region.



Established a **single point-of-contact** (concierge) for the region to assist employees seeking assistance finding employment for spouses of professionals recruited to the area.

Employer Training - To identify and groom new managers from existing workforce.

- Workshops/seminars
- Informational articles in quarterly e-newsletter

2007 FUNDING PARTNERS

Aquila

Audubon County Economic Development

Carroll Area Development Corporation

Chamber & Development Council of Crawford County

Greene County Development Corporation

Midwest Partnership Corporation

Ida County Economic Development

Sac Economic & Tourism Development

Region XII Development Corporation

Glidden REC

MidAmerican Energy

Aquila

Alliant Energy

Western Iowa Power Coop

Sac County REC

Northwest REC

Midland Power Coop

UNI Institute for Decision Making

City of Arthur

City of Auburn

City of Sac City

City of Lake View

City of Wall Lake



www.westerniowaadvantage.com

