

Western Iowa Advantage is a collaborative group of economic development officials in Audubon, Calhoun, Carroll, Crawford, Greene, Ida, and Sac Counties.

Western Iowa Advantage Annual Report Released

The WIAD Annual Report in it's full, original format can be viewed [HERE](#).

THE FOUNDATION WE'VE BUILT STILL STANDS

REMEMBERING WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN A CHALLENGING YEAR

Let's face it —it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the first events of this new decade. As developers, we're drawn to words like "growth", "progress" and "investment". But lately we've been saying things like "downturn," "surviving," and "recovery." While our plans for the year may have been temporarily rearranged, we have each experienced surprising effects in our communities; some of them surprisingly positive. We've seen the networks we've built become vital as we learn from each other. We've watched our communities pull together to help those suffering most. We've even seen people using the slowdown as an opportunity to start or improve a business, and we've talked to old acquaintances looking for somewhere new to locate... somewhere calm and that feels like home... a place like Western Iowa. We certainly have challenges to overcome, but the quality of life and the connections we've built together will certainly endure. We will all work together to ensure it.



FORGING THE FUTURE

AN INNOVATIVE MODEL FOR HIGH TECH EDUCATION PREMIERES IN JEFFERSON



Western Iowa has everything a cutting edge technology consulting firm needs--- location amenities, connectivity, and great people. That's why Jefferson was chosen by Pillar Technology, part of Accenture Industry X.0, as the home for their new addition to their worldwide network of innovative business solutions studios called Forges.

First, they readily found a building with expansive square footage right on the town square. In addition, there were capital sources to complete the office build-out and enterprise business class fiber Internet connectivity with built-in Internet backbone dual-redundancy.

However, Pillar Technology is not just in Jefferson to take advantage of what the community has to offer, but to improve it by shaping it as a springboard to boost the state's tech pool. Pillar Technologies and Corteva Agriscience teamed with the Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) and Iowa Central Community College to foster Computer Languages programs to train the Western Iowa workforce for the digital economy.

As a matter of fact, the intense training begins in high school, moves through the community college courses, and ends with four months of free training at the Jefferson Forge Academy. Students then have the opportunity to apply for a paid six-month apprenticeship at the Jefferson Forge, or to anywhere else they desire because the education they receive has no strings attached.

OTHER ONGOING INITIATIVES

Western Iowa Advantage uses an integrated marketing approach to reach decision makers. Whether company executives conduct the search or hire a site selection consultant, WIAD demonstrates how easy it is to access information about labor force, tax climate and much more. Some of our marketing and outreach efforts include:

WESTERN IOWA INDUSTRY VISITS

Numerous times a year, the WIAD partners take time to tour industrial facilities across the region. The group works to make connections between local companies so more money stays here in Iowa and we remain informed of the current challenges facing our companies in western Iowa.



WEBSITE IMPROVEMENTS

WIAD partners continue to work with Golden Shovel Agency, experts in economic development marketing, to bring new and improved features to our ever-expanding website. Their partnership is allowing increased editability, more frequent updates and a range of tools to stay relevant in today's constantly shifting technology landscape.



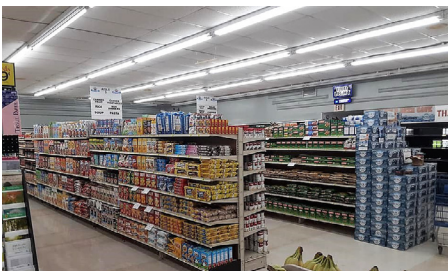
CONTENT & NEWS UPDATE CREATION

WIAD continues to work with Golden Shovel Agency and their specialized media creation service called Gatekeeper to build an extensive repertoire of news and updates which will be shared on the WIAD website and throughout a selection of social media networks. The goal is to highlight successes and opportunities in the region, as well as to leverage the content to attract more positive media attention. Stay tuned as this new initiative grows into a valuable resource for marketing all the great things happening in the region!

Manson Opens New Non-Profit Grocery Store

Nearly one year after the closure of its local grocery store, the community of Manson opened Manson Hometown Grocery, which is operating as a non-profit corporation and believed to be the first in the State of Iowa to operate as such.

After the previous grocery store, Heartland Market, owned by Nick Graham, closed last fall, Manson Mayor Dave Anderson and a grocery store committee formed to pursue establishing a community-owned and operated grocery store. The committee hosted well-attended and informative community meetings where a request for donations was made toward the project. More than 130 individuals and businesses responded, with an excess of \$180,000 in donations being made toward the effort.



During the summer months, an enormous volunteer effort took place in the building, with cleaning, repairing, refurbishing, and replacing the equipment and infrastructure of the grocery store and giving the building a new look and feel that is more welcoming and inviting, including a beer cave that boasts the "coldest beer in town".

The store opened on Thursday, November 5 and is receiving outstanding positive feedback and numerous shoppers, as many Manson community members are enjoying having a grocery store back in their hometown.

Manson Hometown Market Board President Mark Egli points out, "The community of Manson has created something it can be proud of. The store may not answer our every need, but I think we've all experienced what it's like not having a grocery store at all. This store will evolve over time and respond to customer suggestions and requests. After all, Manson Hometown Grocery is you."

Both the WIAD Region & the State of Iowa See Unemployment Rate Increases in September

The Western Iowa Advantage Region's monthly unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) rose from 2.0 percent in September 2019 to 3.1 percent in September 2020, according to figures released from Iowa Workforce Development. Iowa's unemployment rate was 4.3 percent in September 2020 up from 2.4 percent in September 2019. The U.S. unemployment rate was 7.9 percent in September 2020. Total employment in the region fell from 40,990 in September 2019 to 37,110 in September 2020.

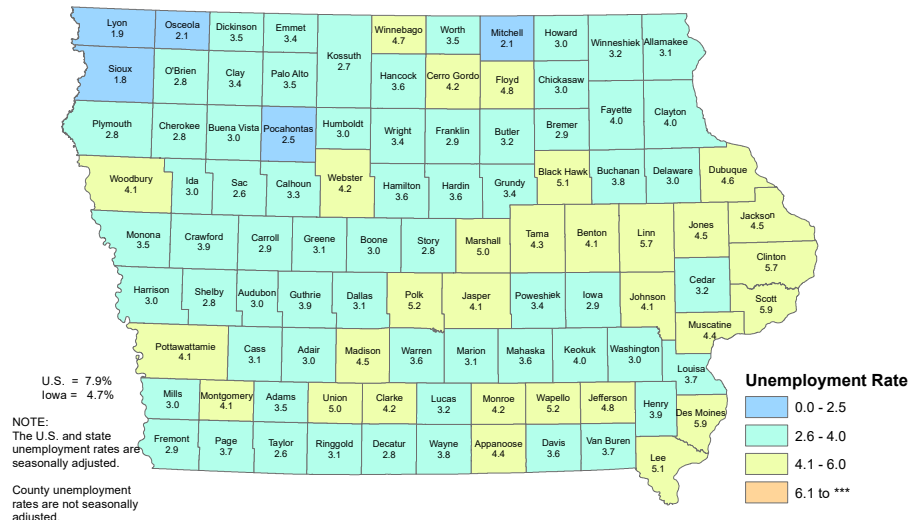
Western Iowa Advantage tracks various economic indicators in Audubon, Calhoun, Carroll, Crawford, Greene, Ida, and Sac Counties in Iowa, including employment trends.

County unemployment rates in the region for September 2020:

Audubon 3.0%
Calhoun 3.3%
Carroll 2.9%
Crawford 3.9%
Greene 3.1%
Ida 3.0%
Sac 3.3%

Iowa Unemployment Rates by County

September 2020



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