



dubuque *works*
a workforce initiative

Connect | Recruit | Develop | Retain

Dubuque Works Strategic Plan 2022–2027

City of Dubuque	Hills and Dales
Clarke University	Holy Family Catholic Schools
Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque	Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Department of Human Services	IowaWorks of Northeast Iowa
Dubuque Area Chamber of commerce	Loras College
Dubuque Area Labor Management Council	Multicultural Family Center
Dubuque Community School District	Northeast Iowa Community College
Dubuque Dream Center	Telegraph Herald
East Central Intergovernmental Association	Travel Dubuque
Emmaus Bible College	United Way of Dubuque Area Tri-States
Fountain of Youth	University of Dubuque
Goodwill	University of Wisconsin – Platteville
Greater Dubuque Development	Western Dubuque Community School District
Hawkeye Area Community Action Program	

INTRODUCTION

The Greater Dubuque region takes the development of our greatest asset—our people—seriously. Dubuque Works is a collaborative of regional partnerships with non-profits, workforce experts, government, and educators which focuses on two main goals:

HUMAN CAPITAL

Identify and address recruitment, retention, and relocation needs as defined by Greater Dubuque employers; build workforce capacity by enhancing training to meet employer demand.

COLLABORATION & EVALUATION

Combine collaborative workforce efforts with quality research to generate evidence-based practices that improve performance and outcomes for local employers.

Dubuque Works is of vital importance to existing companies looking to expand, prospective businesses considering a Dubuque location, and persons looking for career opportunities. Through Dubuque Works, the region is taking a proactive approach to ensure a steady pipeline of talent to support our businesses, and programs to support those seeking prosperity through the dignity and reward of work. Working together at the regional level, we can maximize recruitment and skill development of workforce, regardless of national fluctuations in available talent.

CALL TO ACTION

CONNECT, RECRUIT, CREATE, RETAIN

Now, as in the last decade, the impending baby boomer retirements, broadening skills gaps, job-hopping, brain drain, and employee disengagement have posed the workforce challenge as an unending narrative of calamity. Truly headwinds exist, notably the demographic trends of the Midwest with an aging population and stagnant population growth. The mission of Dubuque Works has proven that concerted efforts in conversation with private business and the community can yield results.

Challenges remain and, as with most complex challenges, we believe the communities that partner are the communities that succeed. The solutions must be varied because communities are unique, as is the labor force within them.

Solutions already developed through Dubuque Works reflect consideration of demographic and workforce data, as well as outreach to targeted populations. This understanding of the labor pool, combined with information gathered from in-depth HR Action and Info Action interviews with companies creates the opportunity for custom solutions for the Greater Dubuque area. The focus areas include:

- **Connect** students, under and unemployed workers, and disengaged populations to career exploration, education and training opportunities that will position them to pursue and attain high-demand jobs in our market.
- **Recruit** talent both close to home and from across the country, including on our own regional college campuses, through effective outreach and regional promotion.
- **Create** through education the technical, academic, and soft skills needed of our workforce now and into the future through collaborations with institutions of higher education, non-profits, and other federal, state, and local resources.
- **Retain** skilled workforce and top talent in the Greater Dubuque region through integrated partnerships with business, non-profits, housing, workforce, health, recreation, and arts and culture communities.

This plan serves as a guide for regional participation in Workforce Solutions. Join us in showing that YOU can be great here through career opportunities, and the programs to attain them. The following pages will walk you through recent Dubuque Works accomplishments, local demographics and trends, state and regional workforce efforts, and our 2022–2027 Strategic Plan.

Dubuque Works efforts and activities are driven by a five-year strategic plan. The previous five-year plan period ran from July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2022. As we come to the end of that period, the Dubuque Works partners evaluate progress and address emerging market changes to inform this next plan to govern work for the next five years: July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2028.

On February 23, 2022 the Dubuque Works partners engaged in a half-day strategic planning session. The goal was to evaluate and align on the purpose, role, and goals of Dubuque Works. Ongoing evaluation of the programs and efforts driven by Dubuque Works is an integral part of the proactive approach of this regional collaborative.

Key takeaways from this effort:

- There is greater opportunity for engagement with target populations (e.g. diverse and underserved communities, under and unemployed, disengaged potential workforce). This will serve to both share information on Dubuque Works partners programs, as well as engage these populations in program efficacy and potentially highlight gaps programming.
- There is a need to develop more quantitative data locally amongst the underemployed, unemployed, and disengaged potential workforce. This is necessary to assess program effectiveness. Coordinating this data collection among partners is an important consideration.
- Create a better referral process between Dubuque Works partners. We need a tool for service providers to better understand each partner's mission and program offerings to foster more successful inter-organizational referrals.

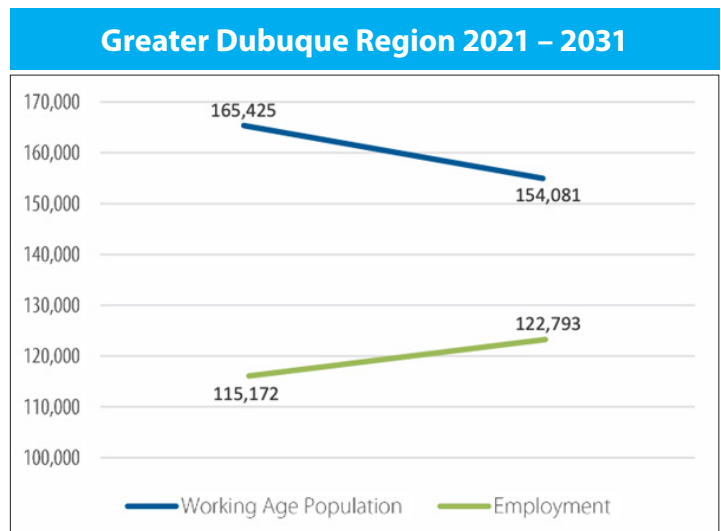
This document is the culmination of that evaluation and planning process to synthesize the 2022–2027 Dubuque Works Strategic Plan.

LOCAL WORKFORCE TRENDS

MSA Median Wage Change								
Area	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	1-Year Change	5-Year Change	Rank
Rochester	\$19.20	\$20.03	\$20.23	\$21.76	\$23.45	1%	5%	1
Des Moines	\$18.68	\$19.37	\$19.93	\$20.47	\$21.62	3%	7%	2
Iowa City	\$17.71	\$18.38	\$19.03	\$19.73	\$21.09	4%	7%	3
Cedar Rapids	\$18.04	\$18.48	\$19.15	\$20.08	\$20.80	4%	6%	4
Ames	\$18.14	\$18.69	\$19.06	\$19.71	\$20.48	2%	5%	5
La Crosse	\$16.31	\$16.82	\$17.61	\$18.67	\$19.89	4%	8%	6
Dubuque	\$16.02	\$16.82	\$17.37	\$18.86	\$19.61	3%	8%	7
Quad Cities	\$16.59	\$17.07	\$17.61	\$18.51	\$19.60	3%	6%	8
Waterloo	\$16.16	\$16.30	\$16.80	\$18.14	\$19.32	3%	4%	9
Platteville	\$15.40	\$15.83	\$16.61	\$17.25	\$18.45	5%	8%	10
Sioux City	\$15.76	\$16.54	\$16.68	\$17.34	\$18.37	1%	6%	11

Employment Growth		
Region	2011 - 2021	2021 - 2031
Dubuque MSA	1.7%	5.2%
Dubuque Region	0.1%	5.5%
State (IA)	1.9%	6.3%
Nation	8.6%	6.2%

Working Age Growth		
Region	2011 - 2021	2021 - 2031
Dubuque MSA	1.5%	-4.6%
Dubuque Region	-2.2%	-6.9%
State (IA)	2.3%	-1.0%
Nation	4.7%	-1.7%



The negative impact of COVID-19 to workforce across the nation cannot be overstated. In the Dubuque MSA, there is a lingering imprint. Total Non-farm Employment in Dubuque MSA is down 2,000, or -3.31%, when comparing January 2020 to January 2022. Labor Force in Dubuque MSA is down 2,000 persons, or -3.45%, when comparing January 2020 to January 2022. Since the lows of the pandemic, the Dubuque MSA has grown employment at the second fastest pace compared to other Iowa MSAs¹, but that growth has come to a stop.

Employment in the Dubuque MSA is projected to grow 7.6% in the next 10 years at a rate slightly above the projections for the region (6.6%).¹

While the working age population (ages 15 – 69) is projected to decline in the Dubuque MSA (-4.6%), with the greatest decline projected for the region at -6.9%, this is an undeniable obstacle to economic vitality in the region.²

Iowa's labor force participation rate hovers around 67%. The labor force participation rate is the percentage of the eligible age population that is either employed or actively seeking work. Nationally, the rate is currently 61.9% (Dec. 2021).³

The region's unemployment rate remains low at 3.7% (Dec. 2021) and below the national unemployment rate of 3.9% (Dec. 2021); highlighting the region's need to import workforce as part of an overall workforce strategy.⁴

The Dubuque MSA's median hourly wage per worker of \$18.81/hr. is 5.1% less than the State median. Of the nine MSAs in Iowa, Dubuque's median wage ranks fifth.⁵

¹ Iowa Workforce Development Current Employment Statistics

² Greater Dubuque Development Corp. Skills Gap 2021

³ Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics

⁴ Iowa Workforce Development

⁵ Iowa Wage Report - Occupational Employment Statistics (OEWS) data is updated annually and generally released during the third quarter

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

POPULATION

The U.S. Census Bureau's most recent 2020 decennial census showed a population of 99,266, approximately 6% growth from 2010 decennial census with a population of 93,653. The City of Dubuque in that same time period saw approximately 3.5% growth to 59,667.

WORKFORCE

The Greater Dubuque laborshed includes a seven-county, tristate region, with Dubuque as the employment and population hub. All areas are well connected by four-lane highways, and it is common for employees to travel throughout this area for work. This laborshed includes approximately 165,425 residents of working age. Dubuque County shows 66,509 residents of working age, and approximately 59,900 working in the county as of December 2021.

WORKFORCE INNOVATION & OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA)

In 2014, Congress passed reauthorizing legislation, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), for the nation's workforce development system. WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. Congress passed the Act with a wide bipartisan majority; it was the first legislative reform of the public workforce system since 1998.

WIOA's emphasis on credential attainment, sector partnerships, career pathways, and enhanced data is supported by the Dubuque Works collaborative.

SECTOR PARTNERSHIP & CAREER PATHWAYS

Sector partnerships are nationally recognized as an effective method for aligning education, economic and workforce development systems to address labor market needs. Effective sector partnerships are industry-driven, meaning industries identify needs and assume the lead role in developing strategies which address their identified needs.

Dubuque Works supports the following sector partnerships:

- Information Technology Sector Partnership
- Manufacturing Alliance
- Long-term Care Sector Partnership
- Transportation Sector Partnership
- Construction Sector Partnership

Career pathways, such as those provided through Opportunity Dubuque, are one strategy utilized by sector partnerships to address industry-identified workforce needs. Career pathways organize education and training into a stackable sequence aligned within specific occupations within a given industry. In this way, career pathways support an individual in developing the personal, technical, and employability skills required for advancement within an industry and transitioning from training and education into the workplace.

Dubuque Works supports the following career pathways through Opportunity Dubuque:

- Assembly Operator
- Building Construction
- Construction Equipment Operator
- CDL/Semi-Truck Driver
- CNC Operator
- Certified Nurse Aide (CNA)
- Childcare Provider
- Executive Administrative Assistant
- Industrial Maintenance
- Pharmacy Technician
- Phlebotomy Technician
- Warehouse Technician
- Welding (Basic & GMAW)
- Work Ready Skills/Intro. to Manufacturing
- Customer Service Professional

2022 – 2027 DUBUQUE WORKS STRATEGIC PLAN

TRACKING PROGRESS

Median Household Income – \$76,000

Total Non-Farm Employment – 64,000

Poverty – reduce by 5%

Human Capital + Collaboration & Evaluation

1. Sustain or increase state and local funding of these critical workforce programs:

- Dubuque Works
- Iowa PACE
- Iowa Adult Literacy and Education
- Iowa GAP tuition assistance
- Iowa Workforce Training and Economic Development Fund
- Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act
- Promise Jobs
- Home Base Iowa
- Registered Apprenticeships
- Future Ready Iowa/Last Dollar Scholar

STRATEGY – Engage local partners to support strategic investments and advocate collaboratively at state and local level

Indicators – Program funding growth, new program creation

STRATEGY – Ensure robust local implementation and communication of these programs to ensure strong outcomes, including sharing of personal success stories

STRATEGY – Work with employers and state and local programs to understand and decrease adverse effects experienced by program participants due to misalignment of state and federal benefits with wage increases, i.e. “Cliff Effect”

2. Increase engagement with local college students, increase retention of local college graduates, and recruit regional college graduates with in-demand skills through strategic partnerships among educational institutions and employers.

STRATEGY – Increase relationships between regional employers and local college faculty, staff, and students, utilizing the Employer College Connections manual—an internship how-to guide for employers

Indicators – Employer College Connections referrals

STRATEGY – Work with higher education institutions to engage first-year, first-generation, undecided students enrolled in college/university first-year courses on local careers and training opportunities during and upon completion of college degree.

Indicators – Graduates retention stats from higher ed

STRATEGY – Increase participation in the Work That Works program to connect local college students to flexible, part-time employment through our local employers

Indicators – Employer partners, student participation (applications, interview, hires)

STRATEGY – Increase utilization of AccessDubuqueJobs.com by both employers and students as a go-to place to find internships and for graduate employment opportunities in the Greater Dubuque Region

Indicators – Internship postings, employers offering internships

STRATEGY – Increase participation of local college students in networking events, Future Young Professionals, and other programs that encourage college student engagement within the community

Indicators – Talent Dubuque participants, participation in future college networking events

STRATEGY – Continue to support Dubuque College Access Network's (DCAN) mission to increase access to post-secondary education and training

Indicators – Talent Dubuque participants, participation in future college networking events

3. Mitigate transportation barriers for college students, workforce, and those seeking skilled training.

STRATEGY – Reestablish campus and partner-funded access to the Jule transportation system for college students, increasing their access to employment and community amenities.

Indicators – Student ridership, program funding

STRATEGY – Increase college population utilizing the Jule in an effort to create additional community connections and retain students longterm.

Indicators – college student ridership

STRATEGY – Expand Jule services to serve more employees.

Indicators – ridership for work, feedback on route alignment from employers and employees

STRATEGY – Expand transportation options for unemployed and Opportunity Dubuque students.

Indicators – Title 1/Opportunity Dubuque/Promise Jobs/Voc. Rehab participants receiving transportation supports for employment, reported persons w/ transportation barriers

STRATEGY – Explore public/private partnership models and employer-supported models to provide transportation to underserved employment centers (i.e. Dubuque West Industrial Park, Peosta Industrial Park and Northeast Iowa Community College campuses in Peosta and Dubuque).

4. Support pathways to employment for individuals with significant barriers to employment such as ex-offenders; individuals with disabilities; individuals with mental health barriers; individuals with substance abuse barriers; unemployed and underemployed individuals; and English Speakers of Other Languages, etc., which include access to 1:1 coaching and wrap-around services (childcare, transportation, work-related cost assistance).

STRATEGY – Close the gap between minority unemployment and overall unemployment in the Greater Dubuque region through identification of barriers to target populations and connections to existing or newly developed solutions.

Indicators – Unemployment and labor force participation overall and by race and gender, 25th percentile household income

STRATEGY – Increase recruitment, completion, and employment of Opportunity Dubuque graduates through strategic outreach; multiple offerings and delivery models; development of new, in-demand certificates; increased engagement with employers; and implementation of a work experience component for individuals with multiple barriers.

Indicators – Opportunity Dubuque data (enrollees, grads, outcomes), Childcare assistance utilization

STRATEGY – Modify, develop, adapt Opportunity Dubuque Programs for developmentally delayed individuals that will lead to employment in high-skill, high-demand areas and/or continued education pathway.

Indicators – Developmentally delayed individuals' Opportunity Dubuque data (enrollees, grads, outcomes)

STRATEGY – Fully implement and enhance Second Chance Hiring pathway for individuals with prior criminal backgrounds who have difficulty obtaining employment, including partnership with Fountain of Youth's mentoring programs and other relevant programs.

Indicators – Reentry program participants, employment/training outcomes

STRATEGY – Develop stronger employer partnerships with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services to increase employment of individuals with disabilities who are seeking employment.

STRATEGY – Build relationships among workforce partners and mental health providers, including substance abuse services, to enhance cross-referrals and improve pathways to employment for individuals from the mental health system.

STRATEGY – Enhance workforce and employment services and improve outreach to English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to increase engagement with this community in workforce opportunities.

Indicators – NICC ESOL program participants, employment/training outcomes

STRATEGY – Increase participation in existing programs and utilization of existing resources in the community through targeted outreach and intentional partnerships with service providers.

Indicators – Targeted population outreach events, participants in events

5. Increase student exposure to high-demand and high-wage occupations through support of PreK – 12th grade workforce readiness programming, including the following:

- Concurrent enrollment
- Dubuque Community School District Vertex program
- Western Dubuque Community School District School to Work program
- Career Learning Link
- Tech Works
- Business After School
- iJag
- Heart program
- Future Ready Iowa website
- Junior Achievement
- Mentorship programs

STRATEGY – Increase communication of local labor market information to educators, counselors, parents, and students, including job outlook and wage information.

Indicators – Local employment market information presentations

STRATEGY – Sustain Dubuque Community School District’s Vertex program, which introduces middle and high school students to high-demand career pathways, including work-related experiences and coursework.

Indicators – Vertex program participants (job shadows, internships, etc.)

STRATEGY – Engage employers to participate in PreK – 12th grade work-based learning opportunities, including increased opportunities for K – 12th grade instructors to participate in externships or partner with the private sector.

Indicators – teacher externships

STRATEGY – Host career exploration events and industry tours for students in middle and high school to expose them to career opportunities in the Tri-State Area.

Indicators – Employer tours for students, MS/HS career fairs

STRATEGY – Increase participation in the Tech WORKS program for students interested in pursuing a career in the trades.

Indicators – Tech WORKS participants, employment/training outcomes

6. Expand pathways for opportunity youth and adults to re-engage in employment and training by completing a high school diploma or a high school equivalency degree, and then continuing a pathway to further education and employment.

STRATEGY – Develop a pathway for individuals without a high school diploma to achieve a High School Equivalent Degree (HSED) and Opportunity Dubuque Training.

Indicators – HSED completions, HSED to employment/training outcomes

STRATEGY – Sustain and enhance Reengage Dubuque to improve program graduates’ ability to continue directly into career training following completion of high school diploma or equivalency.

Indicators – Reengage Dubuque (Dubuque Community Schools) completions, Reengage Dubuque to employment/training outcomes

7. Support integrated partnerships with City of Dubuque and non-profit service providers in Housing, Education, Workforce, and Health to reduce duplication of services to low-income residents and enhance client success to achieve economic stability.

STRATEGY – Sustain relationships among multiple service providers/coaches, including ability to share data and information to improve client hand offs and services.

STRATEGY – Ensure that Dubuque Works supported programs are well-known by service providers outside the workforce sector to increase collaboration, alignment of systems and processes, and cross-referrals.

STRATEGY – Develop in collaboration with partners a resource catalogue and referral tool for service providers to enable better inter-organizational communication.

Indicators – Creation of service provider resource tool, inter-organization referrals

8. Support disaggregation of all program data, workforce data, and population data to identify inequities and bias, support equity education opportunities and utilize an equity lens to inform decisions.

STRATEGY – Continue to disaggregate data and set targets to reduce disparities or gaps

STRATEGY – Share information and partner with Inclusive Dubuque network to enhance equity of Dubuque Works' programming

STRATEGY – Enhance HR Action survey to better connect with employers about equitable hiring practices

Indicators – Number of businesses employing DEI policies

9. Support community development and marketing strategy that attracts workforce, including social media campaign and other joint marketing of the Greater Dubuque region.

STRATEGY – Utilize data from newcomer focus groups and targeted population roundtables to identify regional strengths and challenges in attracting workforce and to develop a shared marketing strategy for the Greater Dubuque region.

Indicators – Newcomer services data (DD participation & feedback, number of community tours, concierge services delivered)

STRATEGY – Partner with Travel Dubuque to leverage existing marketing and implement a shared marketing strategy.

Indicators – Community attraction campaign ROI metrics

