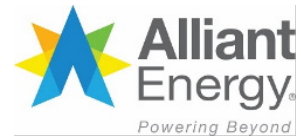


THIS REPORT BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



# Meeting Regional Challenges

2020 will likely be forever known as the year of COVID-19. Northwest Iowa Development (NWID) represents regional economic development partners in Lyon, O'Brien, Osceola and Sioux Counties, as well as the community of Le Mars, and NWID stepped up to meet the unprecedented regional challenges brought about by the COVID-19 crisis. The role of the NWID regional partnership is to take effective, cooperative action together when individual action would be difficult and, less effective. NWID has built a team of volunteers and staff that are proactive and they put solutions in place in a timely manner. The following represents the major highlights of the challenges that NWID tackled in 2020.

## 2020 Highlights

In March of 2020, COVID-19-related information on programs, regulations, safety measures and business closures, started as a trickle and quickly became an avalanche. All of this information, from a variety of sources, was important for economic developers, public officials, businesses and citizens to be readily accessible. By Mid-March, NWID identified the need and created the online COVID-19 Information Clearinghouse. The clearinghouse was integrated into the NWID website and it generated thousands of visits to access the information and over doubled the traffic to our site. The clearinghouse met the immediate challenge...access to information in real time. The one stop clearinghouse demonstrates the power of our regional cooperative approach.

The outbreak of COVID-19 brought major health and safety concerns and the related unprecedented closures of businesses put the mere survival of some of the businesses in question. Helping companies to establish or enhance their online or "virtual" presence was a strategy immediately identified by the NWID partners. Working together cooperatively, NWID established the first ever Northwest Iowa Shop Where I Live online marketplace for regional businesses. 75 businesses established virtual storefronts quickly and more will sign up soon. NWID is promoting the marketplace to potential "shoppers" and the cooperative effort is gaining significant attention. NWID met the challenge and established a tool that will have a lasting impact.



NWID has focused significant energy, resources and efforts on helping our existing businesses to grow. We work cooperatively with our local partners to provide experts who can conduct outreach to industries on foreign trade strategies and promote the benefits of northwest Iowa's unique foreign trade zone (FTZ). NWID understands that expanding markets in these challenging times can make a huge difference. Working together, NWID established FTZ# 288 and the first site has been activated in Hawarden. NWID is working together to meet the challenges of helping our existing industries grow.



Career Opportunities Beyond Expectations

Manufacturing in Northwest Iowa is critically important and manufacturers ability to grow will, no doubt, lead the region through economic recovery. However, addressing the workforce challenges of our regional manufacturers has continued to be a critically important part of what NWID supports.

Over the past years, NWID has supported the formation and growth of the Northwest Iowa Regional Manufacturing Sector Partnership, which now is comprised of 21 regional companies. NWID also markets and promotes career opportunities within these 21 outstanding manufacturing companies. In concert with sector partners and in supporting the sector's Manufacturing Career Coach we are building and maintaining relationships with all our regional high schools to attract students towards manufacturing careers. Workforce development is a long-term challenge and NWID is working together with industry to meet the challenge.

# BUILDING BLOCKS *of* ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

An important part of NWID is the network of dedicated economic development professionals. One of our largest and most utilized benefits is the collaboration of our members. Providing information on best practices and techniques that will contribute to building local economies or, simply the "The Building Blocks of Economic Development" produces results for our members.

NWID has a dedicated effort to schedule monthly member "Roundtables" on key topics such as housing, day-care, workforce, site development and others, where members can exchange ideas and approaches that work. Cooperation and Collaboration are a key ingredient to making our partnership and local economies work and keeps our members on track to meet regional challenges.

## Northwest Iowa Development Board of Directors

Lyon County	Steve Simons (Chair)
O'Brien County	Kiana Johnson
Osceola County	Stephanie Neppel
LeMars	Neal Adler
Sioux County	Dave Miller
Sioux County	Larry Cope (Vice-Chair)
NCC	Jason Anderson
Treasurer	Dan Janssen (ex-officio)
Secretary	Lesa Stofferan (ex-officio)



603 WEST PARK STREET  
SHELDON, IOWA 51201  
1-866-384-2665  
NORTHWESTIOWA.COM