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During Workforce Development month the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP) recognizes the individuals that are making a difference in their communities. We want to celebrate their dedication and commitment to getting America back to work.

This booklet recognizes the individuals and organizations that have made a positive impact in workforce development in the past year. These include:

- **2021-2022 NAWDP Annual Award** winners,
- **Five success stories** of workforce development individuals and their organizations that have made a set new standard of achievement in the industry,
- **Forty-eight Workforce Development Heroes** from around the United States that were nominated by their peers as workforce development heroes due to their outstanding contributions to the industry.

Workforce development is economic development. It is bringing people together in partnerships and collaborative efforts to provide the resources, training and outreach that help improve America’s workforce and economy. None of this can be done without the expertise of the **Workforce Development Heroes** presented in this booklet.

Please join us in recognizing these deserving individuals and organizations for the work they have done.

**Melissa Robbins**  
*CEO, NAWDP*
NAWDP provides the education, resources, and certification credibility to individuals seeking to thrive in the workforce development industry as thought leaders and innovators. As the leading advocate for workforce development professionals, NAWDP builds relationships and connections with other industry-leading organizations to challenge and collaborate for the advancement of the industry.

Major Initiatives

1. Leadership in Industry Certification

   With a history since 1984, NAWDP provides the leading certification in the industry for workforce development professionals. The Certified Workforce Development Professional (CWDP) credential validates and honors the competencies and experience required for success in the industry. The CWDP designation provides a nationally recognized and portable credential accepted as a valuable measurement tool by over 80% of those making hiring, promotion, salary and bonus decisions. The CWDP is based on 5 core competency areas including:
   1. Customer Service Methodology
   2. Diversity in Workforce Development
   3. Labor Market Information and Intelligence
   4. Principle of Communication
   5. Workforce Development Structure, Policies, and Programs

2. Bringing Workforce Development Professionals Together

   Whether you are an experienced workforce development leader, director, manager, WDB member, or new to the industry, NAWDP can help you stay at the forefront of your profession through industry connections and resources. NAWDP is the largest organization of workforce development professionals and is committed to providing development opportunities that reflect industry demands and individual needs. Based on a combination of best practices and professional experience NAWDP continues to provide conferences, resources and e-learning to inspire thought leadership and innovation.

3. Collaborating and Connecting with Leading Workforce Development Organizations

   As the leading advocate for workforce development professionals, NAWDP has a history of building relationships and connections with other leading organizations within the workforce development industry in order to stay current on local and national government policies and communicate these changes to its membership. NAWDP also acts as a clearinghouse for RFP’s and job opportunities posting within the industry.
NAWDP Annual Award Winners
Josh Davies

As Board Chair Heather Leach said, “Josh is the most energetic and engaging person at our conferences. He has been instrumental in connecting people to their own passion for being a workforce professional.”

Through his work as a speaker and trainer, he has engaged and encouraged professionals across North America, the Middle East, and Asia. He has also partnered with organizations in all 50 states to equip trainers and teachers to build the workforce of the 21st century. Through his work at The Center for Work Ethic Development, an organization committed to developing workplace skills in the global workforce Josh continues to be an inspiration and leaders.

2022 Workforce Development Professional of the Year

This award recognizes an individual for their extraordinary innovation that directly or indirectly impacts programs, customers, or professionals within the workforce system and improves employment opportunities in their communities. This award is limited to NAWDP members and is given in honor of Peter Kaiser.

Linda Puppolo

Linda is the Executive Director of Maui County Workforce Development Board, County of Maui Office of Economic Development and is being honored for her creativity in finding new ways to reach target communities and deliver services, especially during the pandemic. Linda created an initiative called the Keiki and Kupuna program which addressed the lack of digital literacy skills that became apparent during the pandemic as services went virtual. The program paired youth with seniors. The Hawaiian children referred to as “Keiki” teach their elders, referred to as “kupuna.” how to use their phones to file unemployment claims and participate in virtual meetings.

Linda’s dedication and expertise have established her as a thought leader and innovator in the workforce development profession.
Employ NV Business Hubs
Jamie Cruz, Executive Director

Employ NV Business Hubs is being recognized for their unique approach of providing WIOA Title I and Title III staff to assist employers in locations where businesses are visiting for other needs. Their Business Hubs are located in organizations such as Chambers of Commerce, City Halls and the public libraries. Launched during the height of the pandemic, these business hubs have become a critical resource for businesses in Southern Nevada where employers can easily access employment and training services through the public workforce development system. The business hubs have re-imaged how American Job Centers serve the community by helping more than 300 businesses, many of which had never worked with the public workforce development system. NAWDP applauds their innovation and creativity. Congratulations to Jaime Cruz and his team.

2022 Workforce Development Program of the Year

This award recognizes the innovative workforce programs. These may include implementation of a new system, process policy, developing an innovative program, creating a new way of delivering services, developing new technology or finding new ways to use technology, create new partnerships, or develop. The award honors the new programs that continue to move the workforce development industry forward into the future.

Central Ohio Transit Authority
Tracy Spikes, Senior Program Manager

Tracy Spikes and her team earned this honor by exemplifying their mission and vision to “Move Every Life Forward.”

The Central Ohio Transit Authority or as they refer to themselves, COTA, operates several workforce programs, including High School Vehicle Maintenance internships. This internship is now a pre-apprenticeship program that provides Career Technical Center High School students the opportunity to work as paid interns in the Vehicle Maintenance Department at COTA. Students receive classroom training, hands-on training and laboratory experiences, and are partnered with mentors in preparation to enter the workforce as entry-level automotive/collision technologies service technicians. This program helps youth obtain the training they need to build successful careers.
2021 Youth Workforce Professional of the Year

This award recognizes exceptional behind-the-scenes customer service that pushes past internal silos to link different teams and accomplish workforce development project goals within an organization. Award winners have a track record of workforce development-related customer service within and outside their organization.

Samantha Freese
Youth Career Coach at CDLE/Colorado Rural Workforce Consortium

NAWDP is proud to present Samantha with this award for her exemplary work in serving more than 1173 youth clients since January of 2019. Sam helped a diverse rural community that is facing extraordinary challenges in lagging wages, high cost of living and lack of housing and childcare. As a diversity, equity and inclusion champion, Sam focuses on youth with disabilities to ensure they also can follow career paths and set meaningful career goals. This includes her first-person training strategy where youth participants take trips to area employers for workplace visits and participate in career exploration activities. Sam's dedication has helped create pathways and employment opportunities for the youth she supports as well as filling needed vacancies for the employers.

2021 Youth Workforce Program of the Year

This award recognizes significant contributions in developing youth workforce development programs. Award winners have developed a youth program that is successful in recruiting youth, assisting youth in a career pathway, and successfully placing youth in employment.

Eckerd Connect's Project Bridge Program
Serving Central and Florida Youth

NAWDP is honored to present this award to Project Bridge which provides transitional services to boys and girls ages 11 to 21 that are reintegrating to their home communities from juvenile justice residential commitment programs. Through an innovative collaboration of organizations, Project Bridge provides educational, mentoring, vocational, and transportation services to help young people achieve stable and successful lives and avoid re-entry into the criminal justice system.

Project Bridge provides vocation training and assistance to more than 200 youth daily in 25 counties across Central and South Florida. And even with the challenges of modifying the program for remote delivery during the COVID pandemic, Project Bridge concluded the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 with 640 certifications administered and 345 youth securing employment. Project Bridge has helped remove the stigma associated with employing the re-entry population by not only placing youth in jobs but also educating the community on how they can get involved.
Success Stories
Fred Lucero

Job Title: Program Manager
Organization: RichmondBUILD/Richmond Works
Service Area: Richmond, CA
Partner Affiliation: Dislocated Worker

Challenge: The RichmondBUILD Academy was established in 2007 as a violence reduction strategy for the City of Richmond. The academy has since become a nationally recognized construction skills and green building training program.
RichmondBUILD’s core mission is to create opportunities and address issues of equity and access for all residents. Over the last fifteen (15) years, RichmondBUILD has expanded the training programs to include Pre-Apprenticeship Construction Skills, environmental remediation including Haz Whopper, OSHA 10, Traffic Control, lighting retrofit, and Solar Installation. We also have direct entry into the following trades: Carpenters Union, Laborers Union, Iron Workers Union, Plumbers & Steamfitters, Heat & Frost Our Direct Entry with Trades, and industry-recognized certifications have allowed our graduates to have meaningful careers.

Over 1,200 Richmond residents have been trained for careers and employment in construction, green building industry, solar installation, and environmental remediation. The RichmondBUILD Academy has achieved an impressive job placement rate of 85% of graduates with an average starting wage of $18 an hour. Our program participants included at-risk and under-served youth, formerly incarcerated and re-entry, immigrants, and women seeking non-traditional careers.
Alicia Wallace

**Job Title:** Marketing Manager  
**Organization:** Michigan Works! Northeast Consortium  
**Service Area:** Michigan counties: Alpena, Alcona, Cheboygan, Crawford, Otsego, Oscoda, Montmorency, Presque Isle  
**Partner Affiliation:** Adult  

**Challenge:** The need for skilled workers is great in northeast Michigan, but unfortunately there aren't always easy solutions to get additional training. Sure, there are some federal and state tuition assistance programs, but many are for "in-district" tuition only, which isn't helpful when there are only 2 community colleges across 8 counties. And sometimes, it's not just the tuition, but the books...fees...gas to/from school...etc. that creates the barrier to achieving that certificate or degree. But fortunately, we can use WIOA Adult funding to help in many of these situations.
Michigan Works! assisted Brianna with tuition, mileage reimbursement, books, and required scrubs. She graduated Summa Cum Laude and received a full-time employment offer before she even graduated!

Describe the steps you took in creating a solution and why it worked.

Jaycee started the nursing program, but with inflation and gas prices, she wasn't going to be able to afford her tuition for her last few semesters. Michigan Works! was able to help her with tuition, mileage reimbursement, and testing fees. Thanks to this assistance, Jaycee could focus on her studies, and she graduated on time. She is now employed full-time and fully self-sufficient. Andrew was a seasonal worker for years but wanted something permanent. He hoped to get his CDL but couldn't afford the training costs. WIOA Adult funds helped Michigan Works! cover Andrew's tuition costs and he now has his CDL-A...and a full-time, year-round job! Brianna was in the Cardiac Sonography program, but with her rent and childcare costs increasing, she wasn't going to be able to afford to finish her degree. Michigan Works! used WIOA Adult funding to assist Brianna with tuition, mileage reimbursement, books, and required scrubs. She graduated Summa Cum Laude and received a full-time employment offer before she even graduated!

Describe the outcome/benefits on the population you serve, your participant, or employer after the steps you took to create a solution were implemented.

These (and many others) have been able to start new careers and elevate their income, thanks to programs like these, that provide not only tuition assistance, but wraparound services to help overcome the barriers that often make degree obtainment unachievable (barriers such as not having childcare, not being able to afford books, not having gas money to get to/from class, not being able to purchase required scrubs or the funds to pay for the final testing)
Anne Wolney

**Job Title:** Assessment and Learning Center Instructor  
**Organization:** Employment Services of Weld County  
**Service Area:** Weld County, CO  
**Partner Affiliation:** Wagner-Peyser Act  

**Challenge:** Every year, Employment Services of Weld County (ESWC) provides on-site services at Weld Project Connect, an annual one-day event hosted by United Way of Weld County. This event offers over 75 on-site services directly to individuals and households struggling and in need due to housing instability, job loss, age, health, and other issues that can interrupt a life. All services provided on the day of the event are free. ESWC staff assist attendees with job searches, resume writing, application completion, enrollment into programs, and more. Patricia attended Weld Project Connect specifically to meet with ESWC staff and mentioned this was the most crucial service she would receive that day. Patricia was out of work due to personal medical issues which she was concerned would impact her ability to obtain full-time employment. Having been out of the workforce for a prolonged time, she was especially wary of writing a resume and didn’t know where to start.
Describe the steps you took in creating a solution and why it worked.

After conversing with her for a while and getting an idea of her strengths, work experience, and transferable skills, an ESWC Assessment and Learning Lab Instructor, alongside a Case Manager, assisted with a job search and were able to craft a pointed resume for a position Patricia was excited to apply for. Staff was to teach her how to write and update resumes in the future, how to avoid age-related pitfalls that may leave her overlooked for opportunities, and how to highlight her skills in an interview. At the end of the meeting, the Assessment and Learning Center Instructor and the Workshop Facilitator made sure she knew about ESWC’s workshops for writing resumes, discovering transferable skills, mastering interview techniques, and the 50+ workshop series, where she can find networking opportunities and additional one-on-one job-seeking help.

Describe the outcome/benefits on the population you serve, your participant, or employer after the steps you took to create a solution were implemented.

Patricia left confident and ESWC staff were so glad they could help her. They gave her tips on writing a resume and additional opportunities to boost her confidence. The Assessment and Learning Center Instructor said, “Helping Patricia was the highlight of my day and what we’re in this business for more information about Weld Project Connect can be found at: https://www.unitedway-weld.org/weld-project-connect/
Douglas Cullen

Job Title: Manager of Career Services  
Organization: Pinkerton Academy  
Service Area: Derry, New Hampshire  
Partner Affiliation: Youth

Challenge: Our Adult Diploma Program supporting students wanting to find academic success in a smaller, more intimate school environment, struggled with offering dual-credit options for students similar to our traditional day-school program. We had no way, given current budget constraints, to offer educational solutions that offer college credit and/or workforce readiness credentials we desired to better equip students for post-secondary experiences.
Describe the steps you took in creating a solution and why it worked.

We contacted the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation (https://www.nhcf.org/) who graciously offered to support our efforts through a grant. The grant covered all administrative, tuition and other costs for students to enroll in two post-secondary programs: * A 2-credit College Success Seminar course offered through Granite State College (https://catalog.granite.edu/course-descriptions/idis/) providing enhanced college-preparatory skills * A workforce readiness credential offered through New Hampshire's WorkReadyNH Program (https://www.ccsnh.edu/colleges-and-programs/workready-nh/) giving students priority when interviewing for employment with nearly 70 different New Hampshire employers. The program also prepares students to sit for the National ACT NCRC Exam enabling them to obtain ACT National Career Readiness Certificate (ACT NCRC) recognized by employers across the nation.

Describe the outcome/benefits on the population you serve, your participant, or employer after the steps you took to create a solution were implemented.

With our return to "in-person" instruction we realized the following successes including an increase in actual student enrollment by 23% over our initial estimates from the Oct 2020-Jan 2021 timeframe: I. 100% of the WorkReadyNH 15 enrolled students also took the NCRC (ACT) national exam: - 2 obtained GOLD - 2 obtained SILVER - 3 obtained BRO-NZE II. 16 students registered for the Granite State College IDIS 502 dual credit opportunity. 15 completed the class and successfully obtained two college credits III. We implemented a new work-readiness software through "Talk Hiring" (https://www.talkhiring.com/). The software was evaluated with good success according to student surveys. We are now looking to broaden the footprint of the software's usage for 2022/2023 given the pilot's success.
**Aaron Poynter**

**Job Title:** Director of Reentry Programming  
**Organization:** Cumberlands and South Central Workforce Development Boards  
**Service Area:** 23 Counties in South Central/Eastern Kentucky  
**Partner Affiliation:** Adult

**Challenge:** The challenge was addressing all of the needs for someone in the justice system to begin building both the job skills and the skills to navigate the barriers to long-term, sustainable employment.

Our workforce problem is a community problem and we have taken a microscope to the various localities from a resource standpoint as well as employer needs in the various areas. We have been able to take a unified approach to address barrier reduction and elimination as well as creating a viable pipeline from the workforce development board to employers of untapped talent.
In 2021 we served over 600 individuals with various needs. 182 individuals were "targeted/dedicated case managed by the reentry division resulting in 143 positive employment outcomes.

Describe the steps you took in creating a solution and why it worked.

Multiple innovative practices were developed to assist the justice involved population in the region.

1. We were selected to pilot the best practices of serving the justice-involved population via "Putting Kentuckians1st" state Workforce Board initiative. This approach drove a task force approach via a partnership with the County Attorney’s Office locally receiving referrals in which we have been able to case manage, monitor and ensure barrier reduction and elimination for participants and their return to the workforce.

2. Developed a database (www.kares.us) which puts local resources at the fingertips of individuals within the local community and allows them to access these resources within their respective counties. In partnership with the local governments, we are able to reach, monitor, and refer individuals to barrier elimination/reduction partners and assist them in their return to the workforce. This data is tracked and shared with partners to make services offered more accessible.

3. Piloted certificate training and work release programming in local county jails. We spearheaded 3 welding cohorts at a local detention facility resulting in the graduation of 12 participants (10 additional participants are currently enrolled). After the participants graduate they enter a work release program where they can leave the detention facility and go to work earning a wage. This wage is used to pay off fines/fees and judicial costs as well as the individual retains a portion for savings.

Describe the outcome/benefits on the population you serve, your participant, or employer after the steps you took to create a solution were implemented.

We have seen tremendous success in the efforts we have put into place. Through the reentry (justice involved) specific pipelines we have seen a greater than 80% success rate of employment outcomes across the two regions. In 2021 we served over 600 individuals with various needs. 182 individuals were "targeted/dedicated case managed by the reentry division resulting in 143 positive employment outcomes. In addition, we were able to create a pipeline from a locally based recovery home resulting in 43 positive employment outcomes. Taking a targeted, team approach with the Workforce Board as the catalyst ensures a team approach to services. Creating a "no wrong door" approach for members of our community to receive the barrier removal assistance they need as well as creating access to a talent pool that has previously been untapped.
Workforce Heroes for 2022

Category by Region
**Abigail Gibbs**  
*Special Projects Coordinator, Career Team*  
North Haven, Connecticut  |  Nominated by: Dana Fenwick  
While Abigail is still new to Workforce Development, she navigates Workforce Development like a seasoned professional. She is willing to take on a project and see it to completion. She brings a refreshing energy to Workforce Development, is an amazing team player, is humble, and has no idea how her excitement about Workforce Development impacts those around her. She does it all with a smile and her passion for her work always shines through. Thanks Abigail for all you do, both seen and unseen.

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**Randy Johnson**  
*Job Seeker Consultant, Equus Workforce Solutions*  
New Haven, Connecticut  |  Nominated by: Karen Cirincione  
Randy is a workforce hero. In his career, Randy has provided many services to job seekers in the New Haven, CT area. Randy is currently a WIOA Job Seeker Consultant, tirelessly providing services to Adults, Dislocated Workers, and those co-enrolled into other programs and projects with services to help them become employed. Randy is one very busy person at the American Job Center yet, he continues to push each participant to move forward towards achieving their employment goals.

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**Bruce Mendelsohn**  
*Resource Development Coordinator, MassHire Central Region Workforce Board*  
Worcester, Massachusetts  |  Nominated by: Jeff Turgeon  
Bruce wrote, coordinated, and won a grant application that earned the MCRWB more than $300K to implement a new partnership with Clark University that expanded free/highly subsidized career development training in IT/Tech-adjacent fields. Bruce managed the three-year program, tirelessly collaborating with partners to help more than 200 Central MA residents of diverse demographics and education levels access stable, high-paying jobs in a regional priority industry.

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**Joanne Natalino**  
*Lead JFES JobSeeker Consultant, Equus Workforce Solutions*  
New Haven, Connecticut  |  Nominated by: Stephanie K. Jones  
Joanne is a hardworking dedicated staff person. She really cares about her participants. Excels in barrier removal and moving participants towards Vocational Education and or Employment for self-sufficiency.
Kristina Testa-Buzzee  
*Chief Regional Workforce Development Officer, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU)*

Bridgeport, Connecticut  |  Nominated by: Sarah Lewis

Besides her stellar work experience and professional accomplishments at CSCU, Kristina stands apart because of her willingness to share her knowledge and mentor others. I am a young workforce development professional, and over the last few years, she has taken time out of her chaotic schedule to mentor me on a regular basis. She embodies everything that a workforce development professional should be, all while growing and nurturing the next generation of leaders in the industry.

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Pamela Tonello  
*Project Director, Equus Workforce Solutions*

New Haven, Connecticut  |  Nominated by: Rudy Racine

Pamela leads a team of 37 at the New Haven CT American Job Center. Throughout 2022, Pamela has led her team to serve 1,000+ job seekers per month. She and her team have expanded community access and are consistently seeking innovative ways to assist job seekers. Pamela and her team partnered with the United Way of New Haven to launch an initiative assisting those living in shelters and Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services to customize work readiness training for Afghan Refugees.

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Kijuana White  
*Talent Engagement Specialist, Equus Workforce Solutions*

Shelton, Connecticut  |  Nominated by: Christina Nerone

Kijuana goes above and beyond to ensure our participants get the best customer service possible. She meets the customer where they are and provides seamless engagement and enrollment into services.
Eboni Burrowes

*Senior Director of Employment Services and Education, Fortune Society*

Long Island City, New York  |  Nominated by: Shawdell Ealey & Petal Foster-Fogenay

Eboni has exceptional leadership skills. She is not recognized for her hard work and dedication to the organization. She encourages and supports her team to be their best, while sometimes forgetting about herself. Her leadership does not consist of delegation, she is completely involved. There is nothing too big or too small. She is respected by the team as well as the population we serve. Many things would not be possible without her.

Ms. Burrowes exemplifies the meaning of teamwork and a leader who leads from the rear. In her 10-plus years at The Fortune Society, she worked from case manager to Senior Director and has not allowed the titles to change her essence of a worker bee. Ms. Burrows subscribed to each one to teach one, and we are all responsible for being the change we see in the world. Ms. Burrow's can-do attitude has helped her to navigate the bleak tresses of non-profit work, and she has not become jaded.

Maria de los Angeles Gonzalez

*Recreational Supervisor, Equus Workforce Solutions*

Aguadilla, Puerto Rico  |  Nominated by: Patricia Lankford

Maria de los Angeles Gonzalez has served in the Job Corps program for over 40 years, helping connect young adults with education and job training. She began her Job Corps career as a Residential Advisor, progressing to Residential Supervisor and then Recreational Supervisor. The students at Ramey Job Corps visit her not only for recreation activities, but for her wisdom and guidance. She is known for her involvement on Center but also for her dedication and community involvement as well.

Shelley Peabody

*Supported Employment Specialist, Syracuse Northeast Community Center*

Syracuse, New York  |  Nominated by: Donna Moore

I hired Shelley in February 2022. She took her knowledge of working in Social Services and became a dynamo so quickly at our organization. She has helped so many individuals find jobs, get enrolled in college, and overcome barriers that were getting in their way. She carries an impressive caseload and knows each of those she works with intimately. She inspires people to be their best, and works hard to help them connect the dots that may have been missing in their lives.
Region 2 (NJ, NY, PR, VI)

Samantha Pugh
Assistant Vice President, Fortune Society
Long Island City, New York | Nominated by: Petal Foster-Fogenay
Samantha is the definition of a SHERO, she embodies all the principles of someone who put's her community and others first. Samantha's motto is to train her team to ascend to the heights she has attained to date in her professional role. Samantha is a boots-on-the-ground lady, who leads from the rear and never shies away from adversity. She is deserving of all accolades.

Region 3 (DC, DE, MD, PA, VA, WV)

Christina Brooks
Senior Director, NextGen Programs and Special Projects
Norfolk, Virginia | Nominated by: Barbara Washer
Christina is my workforce hero because she is an ideal role model who knows how to walk the walk. She generously pours so much of herself into the community while remaining energized and focused. Christina understands the criticality of stakeholder buy-in and is an expert at relationship building. Her list of accomplishments is long, but she always takes time to mentor and coach newer workforce professionals on best practices. Not all heroes wear capes, but Christina deserves a gold plated one!!

Blythe Brunner
Project Director, Equus Workforce Solutions
Saint Marys, Pennsylvania | Nominated by: Bradley Williams
Blythe brings a focus on innovation and flexibility that has led her team to many successes in the North Central Pennsylvania region. For example, Blythe and her team developed a systematic approach to reach out to dislocated workers. When the state implemented the ID.me for unemployment compensation, Blythe worked with her team to ensure that all individuals felt welcome in the CareerLink centers and established relationships to enroll individuals in need of workforce services.

Bruce England
Executive Director, Susquehanna Workforce Network (SWN)
 Havre de Grace, Maryland | Nominated by: Joseph Ricci
Bruce has been an employee of SWN for 37 of its 39 years of existence. He has served in excellence for the last twenty years. He has served in practically every facet of the workforce universe. He was in the trenches serving long before WIOA was even a dream. He has championed SWN to be recognized nationally as a premier network. He has touched the lives of thousands of job seekers in our little corner of Maryland. He is soon to retire and will be in some ways, irreplaceable.
Dana Fenwick  
*Chief Service Delivery Officer, Career TEAM*
Wilmington, Delaware  |  Nominated by: Abigail Gibbs

Dana not only drives positive change in her local community in Delaware, but as the Chief Service Delivery Officer and National Director of Case Management, she empowers staff across the county to make a meaningful impact in their communities. Having been in Workforce Development for over 20 years, Dana’s passion for people and her community has remained at the forefront of her work as she is always willing to help, mentor, or coach wherever needed.

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KayLynn Hamilton  
*Associate Teaching Professor, Penn State University*
University Park, Pennsylvania  |  Nominated by: Chrissie Klinger

KayLynn has been a leader in workforce development for decades. KayLynn has served as a subject matter expert on numerous national level initiatives and currently leads two leadership projects in Pennsylvania which support numerous WIOA efforts. Her most recent accolades include developing materials and providing support and technical assistance to workforce staff around integrated education and training and bringing innovative ideas to Delaware County’s workforce system as a one-stop operator.

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Steve Nunez  
*Program Manager, The School District of Philadelphia*
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  |  Nominated by: John Chao, Peter Ivezaj, Baljit Singh, Kecia Pittman, Eva Tsai, Christopher Ayala, Derek Ross, Maksym Berezhnyi, Georges Louis, Abdelrahman Mohamed, Arash Izadi, Luis Vazques, Daniel Hernandez, Victor Chotesuparach, and Kimberly D. Parker-Butler

Steven Nunez is the definition of a workforce hero. When at my lowest point personally and professionally, his counsel inspired me to push forward when I was contemplating throwing in the towel. When I was comfortable enough to share my struggles with colleagues at that time, they echoed similar sentiments about Steve’s influence.

Steve has made a big impact on my life. In the program that I was in (Per Scholas), I wanted to quit a few times because I was new in the IT industry. Steve and I had numerous conversations where he encouraged me to stay and complete the training, and I am glad that I did. Steve is a true leader that genuinely cares about people and their progress.

Because Steve literally changed my professional life forever. With his decision to accept me to the technical school he gave me the chance to be successful and do things I always dreamed of. He saw my potential when others didn’t. Steve is a true MVP and my HERO.

He’s a great mentor, uplifted communicator and works very hard to equip all of his mentees with confidence, know how and understanding. It is long lasting and the perfect model of how a true mentor should be. Even after over 8 years I’m still effected positively and greatly by his influence.
Region 3 (DC, DE, MD, PA, VA, WV)

**Josefa Carranza**  
*Career Coach, CareerSource Suncoast*  
Sarasota, Florida | Nominated by: Anthony Gagliano

Josefa has been assisting clients throughout the workforce system in our area for 38 years. She has faithfully served the state of Florida in various workforce programs as the legislation has changed assisting children, parents and unemployed. She traveled to Miami for two weeks in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew, and now into her 80s, remains a vibrant resource to any job seeker who enters our office. She’s always looking to help immigrants like herself assimilate to the workforce in our area.

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**Tara Toms**  
*Apprenticeship Coordinator, Keystone Development Partnership*  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania | Nominated by: Tiffany N. Unger

Tara has been instrumental in implementing the Apprenticeship Navigator Program, which has trained nearly 55 Navigators, representing a wide range of professionals. She excels at creating relationships, linking initiatives, and creating a safe and inclusive environment that encourages collaboration. Her dedication to the strategic development of apprenticeships is commendable as she assists with crafting non-traditional programs and advocates for career pathways.

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Region 4 (AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN)

**Josefa Carranza**  
*Career Coach, CareerSource Suncoast*  
Sarasota, Florida | Nominated by: Anthony Gagliano

Josefa has been assisting clients throughout the workforce system in our area for 38 years. She has faithfully served the state of Florida in various workforce programs as the legislation has changed assisting children, parents and unemployed. She traveled to Miami for two weeks in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew, and now into her 80s, remains a vibrant resource to any job seeker who enters our office. She’s always looking to help immigrants like herself assimilate to the workforce in our area.

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**Michelle DeEsch**  
*Career Coach, Equus Workforce Solutions*  
Waddy, Kentucky | Nominated by: Debra Giordano

As a new member of the workforce community, Michelle was able to dive right in and make an impact immediately. Her approach has resulted in true connections and relationship building to increase the effectiveness of the mobile team in Shelby County, KY. Michelle has been instrumental in getting boots on the ground and reaching deep into communities of need, meeting individuals where they are. As a result, the team has strengthened partnerships in a previously underserved community.

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**Charles "Bernard" Moses**  
*Local Veterans Employment Representative, SC Department of Employment and Workforce*  
Florence, South Carolina | Nominated by: Joette R. Dukes

Bernard’s most significant contribution to SC Works Pee Dee is his expert coordination of job fairs. He takes an active role in coordinating several major events each year, serving hundreds of employers and thousands of jobseekers. He was the first to support outdoor job fairs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Bernard consistently places services to the employer and veteran community over himself and endeavors to seamlessly and innovatively deliver services that promotes the team’s success.
Region 4 (AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN)

Nicola Roberts
Career Services Consultant, Career Source Central Florida
Orlando, Florida | Nominated by: Tonya Mays
Ms. Roberts is a workforce hero because she is an analytical thinker who brings ideas to life through her creativity and passion for making positive changes in the workplace among her colleagues as well as for her clients. She shares a wealth of knowledge about resources that become available in the community. The company uses TEAMS and she frequently posts resources available whether it be a free food giveaway at Thanksgiving or free Covid-19 tests, she’s always the first to know and SHARE.

Region 5 (IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI)

Amber Collins
Business Services Specialist, Michigan Works Southeast
Jackson, Michigan | Nominated by: Jozzie Holmes
Amber Collins is my workforce hero because she is knowledgeable, she stays current in all things workforce development. She continues to enhance her skill set by attending classes and training. Amber operates in a spirit of excellence not only with her clients but with her coworkers as well. She freely shares her knowledge and expertise while going over and beyond. Amber achieves all of this with a beautiful smile on her face and in her spirit.

Gus Linde
Executive Vice President of Workforce Strategies, Eastern Indiana Works
Muncie, Indiana | Nominated by: Wayne Williams
Gus’ knowledge of workforce development is only superseded by his passion for helping others and enriching the lives of those in Eastern Indiana. He is a dynamic, servant leader that encourages everyone around him to pursue innovation and to try anything when it comes to elevating those that need help. Gus’ executive leadership is complemented by his nature to mentor and grow professionals while inspiring them to be individuals that leave a signature on the customers we serve.
Region 5 (IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI)

**Ashannti Ross**

*Lead Project Planner, Lake County Workforce Development*

Waukegan, Illinois | Nominated by: DeMar Harris

Lake County Workforce Development is extremely privileged to have Ashannti Ross as a team leader within our organization and within our local community. Ashannti Ross brings strong leadership and experience in community planning, workforce segmentation for underserved communities, and proven experience leading continuous improvement efforts, building cohesive teams, and customer improvement efforts focused on increased customer value and customer satisfaction for our local community.

**Michelle Wilson-Merriwether**

*Associate Director of Workforce Development, Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency*

Pontiac, Michigan | Nominated by: Patrice Dunckley

Michelle Wilson Merriwether is my nominee for Workforce Hero as she gives unselfishly to the world around her. A NAWDP certified workforce development professional, Michelle is Associate Director of Workforce Development at Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency. Whether serving on Food Policy Councils, attending DEI Food Policy Cohorts, or partnering with employers and community leaders, Michelle always puts the needs of the client first in removing barriers to employment and life successes.

REGION 6 (AR, LA, NM, OK, TX)

**Debbie Faubus-Kendrick**

*Director, Crawford County Adult Education Center*

Van Buren, Arkansas | Nominated by: Laura Bean

Dr. Faubus-Kendrick works tirelessly in Crawford County, Arkansas to connect local business and industry to adult learners across the county. She leads her staff to offer a comprehensive, holistic approach to adult education and workforce opportunities. Faubus-Kendrick actively recruited and pioneered a leading Alternative Sentencing Program that has been nationally recognized for the robust level of community partnerships and second chances given to justice involved individuals.

**Tracy Hamel**

*Quality Assurance WIOA/Adult/ DW, Career Team*

Marshall, Texas | Nominated by: Betty Adams

Tracy is always willing to help when I have questions and she is always willing to listen and resolve problems. She is very knowledgeable and if she does not have an answer she will reach out to get the resolution to the problem and get back to me. Tracy makes me feel I can rely on her for support.
Jessie Hicks
*QA, Career Team*
Athens, Texas | Nominated by: Susan Martinez & Ka’Tavia Chilton
She is the best she helps anytime you asked for it and does not make you feel like you are dumb. She will show how to be successful in your role. She goes above and beyond her job title to help anyone who needs.

Jessie is amazing. She is always willing to help others and be there for them even when drowning in her own work. Her compassion, positivity, encouragement, thoughtful words are very much appreciated. No matter what life throws at her or the kind of day she is having she is always there for others helping even when it’s not job related without a doubt. She goes above and beyond her job title and duties. The Athens offices is very grateful to have her as our co-worker and friend.

Deb Koehler
*Director of Quality, Workforce Solutions East Texas*
East Texas | Nominated by: Crystal Cook
Deb has supported all the Quality Team of Workforce Solutions East Texas by providing guidance and encouragement in implementing new strategies to best serve Workforce staff and VIP’s. Deb exhibits the Career Team Values by keeping her word, expressing family values and would never ask anyone to do a task that she would not do herself.

Cassandra Medrano
*Project Manager, Texas Workforce Commission*
Texas | Nominated by: Meghan McGilvra
Cassandra is one of those professionals that immediately you feel comfortable around her and that she truly hears and sees you. She is leading the charge for statewide initiatives that impact Opportunity Youth and Foster Care Youth. Her ability to work with so many partners, keep them all centered in her efforts, and still manage high level stakeholders at Texas Workforce Commission is incredible. When you work with her she is a true collaborator and keeps Youth in her focus!

Angela Robbins-Taylor
*Executive Director, Construction Career Collaborative*
Houston, Texas | Nominated by: Nick Guidry
Angela Robbins-Taylor has served commercial construction contractors in the Houston metroplex as Executive Director of Construction Career Collaborative (C3). Angela’s passion has been to collaborate with project owners, general, and sub-contractors to establish effective workforce policies, ensuring that craft professionals are safer, more highly skilled, and companies are more sustainable. Angela has gone to exceptional lengths to establish a talent pipeline that is impacting the region.
REGION 6 (AR, LA, NM, OK, TX)

Angelia Snow
Executive Director, Workforce Solutions East Texas
East Texas  |  Nominated by: Crystal Cook
Angelia has supported all the employees of Workforce Solutions East Texas and expressed her passions to provide the best service to each other and to our VIP’s. Angelia will not only provide guidance, but also will work by your side to ensure quality of service and understanding.

REGION 7 (IA, KS, MO, NE)

Jerri Bowles
Operations Coordinator, Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development
Jefferson City, Missouri  |  Nominated by: Jeanna Caldwell
Jerri has a servants heart and is willing to do whatever it takes to improve customer service and the workforce system for Missouri. She is admired for her integrity and compassion. She is a leader and true example of workforce professional.

Carrie Keene
Reemployment Coordinator, Nebraska Department of Labor
Grand Island, Nebraska  |  Nominated by: Lisa Hubl
Looking for a team player? Carrie goes the extra, extra mile in everything she does. She accepts challenges and challenges others to perform at high levels. She offers her assistance, willingly shares the ideas and processes she develops, she is willing to take the steps to problem solve and help others with their questions, she involves her community partners in Nebraska Department of Labor programs. Employers and jobseekers seek Carrie out, she knows how to build relationships that matter.

Cynthia Walker
Youth Apprenticeship Subject Matter Expert, MO DESE
Jefferson City Missouri  |  Nominated by: Jeanna Caldwell
Cynthia Walker accelerated Registered Youth apprenticeship in Missouri and has became the SME for RYA nationwide. She created a model of boot camps that has increased the capacity for develop within states. A true partner and professional, her leadership has built a legacy for Missouri’s youth. She knows all of the stories of her students and programs. She makes their stories better with apprenticeship.
Christy Gonzales  
*Manager, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment-Rural Consortium*  
Denver, Colorado | Nominated by: Shannon Garcia, Mark Hoblitzell & Dawn Robards  
Christy has a vast knowledge of the system; she continually looks for processes improvements to make the customer experience greater than before. Christy strives to ensure staff knowledge is always progressing and she excels at creating and implementing new processes and deploying training. Christy believes in the system and she goes above and beyond to ensure that Colorado continues to lead the way. A hero is someone who is admired for outstanding achievements, this is Christy.

Christy is an all-around amazing teammate. I marvel at how she makes time to do everything that she does to serve her community. From delivering staff training and forums helping to establish best practices in service delivery across the state. She is also an expert in our systems and how to best pull data from them. She makes time to share her knowledge and help build the knowledge of others. She is always focused on our mission of serving the public and keeps that as a prime focus.

While Christy’s org chart placement plants her firmly in the Colorado Rural Workforce Consortium, her expertise has proven time and time again to be of statewide benefit. With 25+ years of experience at the state, she is our consistent go-to and subject matter expert for all things workforce. She is an MIS and program expert, our primary trainer for upskilling and support staff on all levels, and is always willing to share her knowledge with whomever needs it, regardless of her own tasks.

Jose Camacho  
*Talent Management Specialist, Equus Workforce Solutions*  
Salinas, California | Nominated by: Terri Balderas  
Jose is the kind of person that shows passion in all he does. The employers are not only a business to him but also become part of the Equus Family. Jose projects positive vibes to everyone he encounters and is always willing to collaborate on new ideas and be apart of a team as well as being able to work independently. He is the kind of person that when he is out of the office, it is noticed because he brings so much enthusiasm and knowledge.

Lucila Gomez  
*Career Advisor, Career Team*  
Salinas, California | Nominated by: Erica Lopez  
Lucy is an awesome employee. She is a Spanish speaker and is constantly with VIP’s and is always willing to help.
Charlotte Johnson
*Business Services Manager, Equus Workforce Solutions*
Salinas, California | Nominated by: Terri Balderas
Charlotte is a hero because of her human approach to situations and the dedication and positive way she communicates and brings teams together to collaborate. She is well respected because of her knowledge and her humbleness when she doesn't know the answer. She provides Legacy everyday in all that she does and is always willing to sit and talk things out. She is always willing to teach and help someone be the best they can be. She is ROLL WITH IT CHARLOTTE... teaching us to roll with it too.

Vickie Tippit
*Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER), State of Nevada Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation*
Las Vegas, Nevada | Nominated by: Ben Daseler
Vickie Tippitt is one of Nevada’s two LVERs. She served in the United States Air Force and as a veteran she recognizes the need to clearly define access to resources for all veterans. Vickie works out of the Business Solutions Office in Las Vegas, NV and serves all of Southern Nevada. Since assuming the LVER position in 2019, Vickie has taken her role as a LVER to a new level. Vickie quickly identified the needs of veterans and has established a community network to assist.

Kweilin Waller
*Deputy Human Services Director- Business and Workforce Development, City of Phoenix*
Phoenix, Arizona | Nominated by: Meghan Mcgilvra
Kweilin is one of those workforce development professionals that is ALWAYS developing others. Her ability to persist through red tape, systems, and politics in order to ensure she is doing what is right for her staff and her customers is AMAZING. She has an incredible ability to work with and through others. She is constantly developing her own team and pushing them to achieve excellence while still understanding they are individuals with their own lives.
Keely Christ
Youth Director, Equus Workforce Solutions
Vancouver, Washington | Nominated by: Nicole Ganier
Keely consistently goes above and beyond for her team and the youth and young adults they serve. She is empathetic and genuinely cares for each person that walks through the front doors. She makes it a point to include everyone on her team, members in the community and customers in the center to ensure everyone is heard and appreciated. With Keely’s leadership and dedication, the youth center has received additional funding to expand services in the next program year.

Deborah Howell
Chief Operating Officer, WorkForce Central
Tacoma, Washington | Nominated by: Katie Condit
Deborah has spent 15+ years in service to those facing barriers to employment. She has worked tirelessly on behalf of women experiencing domestic violence, communities of color, and those experiencing poverty to find meaningful work and thrive. Deborah never seeks the spotlight and always defers credit to others. As a woman of color, she shows up fiercely with lived experience guiding every step of her work. Deborah is a workforce hero and is truly emblematic of what this award represents.

James Hughes
Regional Director of Operations, Career TEAM
Tacoma, Washington | Nominated by: Abigail Gibbs
James’ enthusiasm and drive to help the communities we serve is infectious as he ensures we are doing everything we can to assist our customers and communities on a daily basis. When there are barriers to serving a customer, his creative and out-of-the-box thinking helps teams reach solutions. James is a workforce hero because he not only betters his community, but he actively coaches others, including myself, to be better workforce professionals so we can all make a greater impact.

Nick Hughes
Job Developer, Career Path Services
Spokane, Washington | Nominated by: Kelli Eller
For the past 20 years, Nick has been a valuable member of organization. As a Job Developer, he serves both employers and job seekers. His work requires him to develop meaningful relationships with employers to identify their hiring needs and then partner with his peers to identify qualified candidates to meet those needs through either direct hire or on-the-job training opportunities. He believes in helping others find their passion to work and truly embodies all the values of our organization.
Ashley Sloan
Program Manager, Young Adult, Career TEAM
Tacoma, Washington  | Nominated by: Carly Holak & Alyssa Simmons
Ashley joined our team as a Career Advisor and quickly found her passion and expertise for Workforce Development, transitioning to a lead for our Special Projects Team. Unfortunately, Ashley was so successful as a lead for our Special Projects Team that she was quickly promoted to Youth Program Manager for WIOA. She has continued to support all levels of the team and VIP’s that we serve while transitioning and adopting a new contract while managing a growing and changing team at the same time.

Ashley is an amazing leader and always puts her team first. She collaborates with her teammates to identify what support her staff needs and has facilitated many engaging professional development sessions to ensure training is thorough. Ashley greets every customer with a smile and provides an amazing VIP experience. She jumps in to assist her colleagues with multiple projects and is often looking ahead to plan great outcomes for the young adults for her community.
NAWDP’s Online Community
NAWDP CONNECT - AN ONLINE COMMUNITY FOR MEMBERS

Get access to the latest Workforce Development industry news and updates now from any devise allowing you to stay in the know from wherever you are. Connect with other NAWDP members on the latest topics and discussion in the industry. Stay abreast of all the latest local and national events.

Get The Most From NAWDP’s CONNECT Online Community

Here are several tips and tricks to become an active member of NAWDP and receive the most benefits from the CONNECT Online community.

1. **Build your profile** – sign-in to the online community on the NAWDP website and complete your profile information. If you don’t see your profile, click on your name in the top upper right of the screen and click on “Account + Settings.” Complete as much information about yourself as possible so other NAWDP members can learn about you. Also make sure to place a professional headshot picture!

2. **Set Your Preferences** – once you complete your profile, go to the “Information & Settings” tab on the left menu and set your preference for when and how you wish to be notified on updates and discussions. Receiving emails when specific things happen within the community keeps you updated and engaged. Don’t forget to set your time zone at the bottom of the page!

3. **Set your Forum Settings** – in the “Information and Settings” section go to the top “Forum Settings” tab and subscribe to any forums that you are interested in and want to contribute to and follow. Add your personalized forum signature so others learn about you and can connect.

4. **Refer a Colleague or another Workforce Professional you know** – in the “Information and Settings” section go to the “Referrals” tab at the top and click on “Refer a friend.” You can create a personalized email. Watch for upcoming incentives and prizes for referring new members.

5. **Connect to your Social Media** - in the “Information and Settings” section go to the “Manage Connected Apps” in the top tabs and connect your Facebook and LinkedIn profiles.

6. **Request to Join Groups** – Find different groups that you wish to participate in and send a message to one of the group administrators. There are already groups for each major region so you can quickly connect with others in your area. If you are interested in starting a new group that you feel will benefit NAWDP members please let Melissa Robbins or Amanda Grigsby know.

If you are interested in getting more involved and becoming a Group Ambassador or Forum Moderator please refer to the job roles on the back. **To use the NAWDP CONNECT online community you must agree to the “Terms of Use” guidelines on the back of this page.**
Terms of Use

NAWDP’s CONNECT Online Community and forum are for the benefit of NAWDP members and the workforce development community. By using this website and engaging with the discussions and forums you agree to the following:

1. You agree not to post or upload material on the forums unless it is yours, you have consent from the copyright owner, or you know the material is public domain.
2. You agree not to paste materials from other websites into the forums, especially entire webpages, tables, or charts which may contain HTML or other code from another website. This is to respect copyrights as well as prevent formatting errors within the forums.
3. You agree not to post any advertising, solicitations, trading of goods or services, or other commercial activities on the website or within any of the forums. No bulk messages, spam, chain letters, or repeat postings of the same message are permitted. You agree not to link out to commercial sites or sales pages.
4. Online discussion forums are like any other organized gathering of people; there are rules of etiquette everyone is expected to follow. We believe in free expression of a variety of viewpoints and critical discussion of all ideas. Your experience is bound only by a set of common-sense rules that ask you to be civil and show respect for others when you are online.
5. You agree not to post anything which is false, vulgar, obscene, sexually-oriented, invading someone’s privacy, or otherwise in violation of ANY law. You agree not to use ethnic slurs or hate speech or any profanity.
6. NAWDP reserves the right to edit or remove objectionable or inappropriate posts. This site does not monitor all forum messages in real time or hold them for approval, so objectionable content cannot be removed until it is seen by the administrators or moderators. Violators who post objectionable content may receive a warning, or have their memberships terminated.
7. NAWDP does not warrant the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information posted by members. Messages posted in the forum do not necessarily reflect the views of the management. Messages posted on this site by members express the views of the author only.

By becoming a NAWDP Member and participating in any online community you agree to abide by these policies.

Roles

Ambassadors

Ambassadors are thought-leaders within a group or overall community whose activity and content will become visible to all of your members. As an Ambassador you will help ensure that new members and initial log ins are engaged immediately upon using the community for the first time. You will play a significant role in establishing an environment that encourages innovation and mind-share by creating and interacting with rich and relevant content. This role is more than just a moderator. It is for those that are thought leaders in the workforce development industry and are interested in mentoring others. The expectation for Group Ambassadors is to take a leadership role in developing content on a monthly basis and actively commenting on posts within the Group and any forums associated with the group. This includes starting new forums topics as required or suggested within the Group.

Forum Moderator

A forum moderator oversees the communication activity within a specific forum. In most cases this person is a subject matter expert in the forum topic(s) and helps both facilitate and regulate what is posted within the forum. They will monitor the interchange of contributors and make decisions regarding content and direction of threads.

If the tone of the forum becomes hostile or starts to move in a direction of personal attacks or misinformation, the forum moderator has the discretion to lock the discussion to prevent interchanges that are not within NAWDP’s terms of use. They may also hide discussions that they deem are unworthy of further discussion.

The moderator’s duties are as diverse as the forum topics themselves. Their role is to engage thought leading discussions for the betterment of NAWDP members and the Workforce development community.
National Association of Workforce Development Professionals

NAWDP provides the professional development, resources, and certification credibility to individuals seeking to thrive in the workforce development industry as thought leaders and innovators. As the leading advocate for workforce development professionals, NAWDP builds relationships and connections with other industry-leading organizations to challenge and collaborate for the advancement of the industry.

Top Ten Reasons to Become a Member

1. Become eligible to obtain the industry-accepted credentials of a Certified Workforce Development Professional (CWDP)
2. Build connections with other industry professionals through NAWDP Connect, an online member community
3. Gain access to industry-leading resources to thrive as a thought leader and drive advocacy within the industry
4. Receive discounted membership pricing on certification, professional development, conferences, and events.
5. Member-only access to post RFP’s and industry opportunities
6. Ability to post and review current workforce development job opportunities
7. Become a part of the largest organization of workforce development professionals
8. Join other industry leaders at annual conferences for networking and development
9. Be a critical piece in inspiring innovation and change within the workforce development community.
10. Advance your knowledge, credibility and value in the workforce development industry