The workplace as we know it has changed. As the Rural North State adapts to the “new normal,” Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc.’s essential services are a lifeline to businesses and workers struggling to find footing in an uncertain labor market. Among these critical services, is the Rapid Response program.

Rapid Response was designed to be a proactive, business-focused program to assist companies facing potential layoffs or plant closures. Rapid Response teams provide early intervention assistance to avert potential layoffs, and immediate on-site services to assist workers facing job losses. This process is normally triggered when a business issues a WARN (Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification) notice. The California WARN Act is a regulation that requires employers to provide workers and local government officials with at least 60 days notice before a mass layoff, plant closure or a major relocation. Normally, this notice gives our Rapid Response team time to conduct an on-site visit to assist both the business and employees. However, due to the unprecedented scale of the lay-offs, and the prohibitions of the isolation order, AFWD management sought a solution that was both virtually accessible and broadly available.

AFWD staff developed a virtual presentation to provide affected workers information and guidance on navigating a lay-off. We leveraged our relationships with county Social Service providers and the EDD, to provide information on resources and programs available in each of the counties we serve. In an effort to reach as many people as possible, invitations were sent to local employers and emailed to all job seekers in our social media channels.

In addition to providing information on AFWD services and current job leads, the Virtual Rapid Response webinars included an overview of the Unemployment Benefits application process, and information on county assistance programs such as CalFresh, CalWorks, MediCal, and General Relief. AFWD staff also provided information on various local resources for housing, utility payments and food assistance. All attendees were provided with a list of local resources complete with phone numbers and website. The webinars for each of our service counties are now posted to our website as are the links to state, county, and nonprofit assistance programs at www.afwd.org.
In April and May, Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc., in partnership with Chabin Concepts, hosted Robert Eyler, Ph.D. for a series of webinars to help businesses, local officials, and community members gain an understanding of the local and regional economy in light of the global pandemic.

Dr. Eyler is an Economist and Director of the Center for Regional Analysis at CSU, Sonoma and President of Economic Forensics & Analytics, Inc. in Petaluma, CA. Dr. Eyler previously assisted our region with economic analysis of the Camp Fire and Carr Fire, and as a featured speaker at the CSU Chico Center for Economic Development (CED) North State Economic Forecasts Conferences for the past several years.

While Dr. Eyler pointed to the social and financial policies developed by Federal, State, and Local governments as both timely and at least marginally effective, he also offered several warnings for the short-and-long term future:

- Municipal revenue losses from hotel occupancy and sales tax will likely have long term impacts on budgets for development projects and local services.
- Micro businesses, especially those that cannot pivot to an online platform will likely not be able to weather continued or renewed isolation orders.
- Inability to produce a vaccine, or unwillingness of the public to comply with measures to curb contagion, will lengthen the economic downturn or recession.

Dr. Eyler expressed three possible scenarios for economic recovery:

- A reduction in new cases by vaccine or social policy leads to a quick recovery, with signs of recovery visible as early as 2021.
- A “deeper dive” brought about by renewed rise in COVID-19 cases that slows any real recovery to 2022.
- A long-term recession caused by widespread business closure, unemployment, and spread of disease, that takes years to rebound from.

Dr. Eyler warns businesses and local governments to prepare for a lean few years and encouraged businesses to explore funding from the Small Business Administration to keep afloat until the pandemic subsides. “Please talk to your banker about a U.S. Small Business Administration loan. Some are forgivable, some not, but make sure they’re good plans for you. Know that the money is there.”

As North State communities, businesses, and local governments try to weather the next uncertain months and years, AFWD will continue to bring expertise like that of Dr. Eyler, to help us make informed decisions as a community. AFWD Business Service Representatives can be reached any time for assistance with HR consultation, financial incentives to hire local workers, and access to government resources, at www.afwd.org.
Growing Our Own!

The On-The-Job Training (OJT) program is a vital tool for Modoc County businesses desiring to “Grow Their Own” career employees from the pool of local young people in Modoc. This program offers valuable career opportunities and training to young people with little to no work experience or job skills. It also offers financial support to the employer during training through reimbursement of a portion of training wages and support for the trainee from a Career Center Advisor from Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD).

Emma Brandes was a resident of the small town of Canby and was looking for employment in the Healthcare sector in her local area, but opportunities were quite limited. She had applied for a full time Dental Assistant position with the Canby Clinic. However, Emma only had volunteer experience in food service and light office work after graduating from high school in 2019. Emma was seeking a career in the Healthcare sector to fulfill her desire to help people and to establish a career in a growing field. The Canby Clinic was interested in hiring Emma through an On-The-Job Training as she would require extensive one-on-one training to gain competency given her lack of experience and skills. Emma completed interviews and career interest assessments with AFWD staff and was determined to be a good match for the Dental Assistant occupation. Given her lack of experience and skills, a six month OJT was determined to be an appropriate length of time for her to gain competency in her new position. Monthly evaluations were scheduled to help the employer and Emma during the OJT. In addition to hands on training in the office, Emma completed extensive Dental Radiology Safety training.

Emma successfully completed her OJT this spring. She commented, “I am feeling greater confidence in my skills and enjoy being part of the dental team at Canby Clinic. I am proud to have achieved my goals and have a career.” Congratulations, Emma!
Partnerships = Pathways to Success

The National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) temporary job creation program for the Winter Storms of 2019 in Modoc County produced many success stories over the course of the five months of field work on the project. These successes were achieved through partnerships between Alliance For Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD), Modoc County, the U.S. Forest Service and Cal Fire. Modoc County provided supervision of a total of 14 temporary workers for storm projects in Lake City, the Pit River Levee and the Cedar Pass Campground. The County also provided CPR/First Aid training for the Lake City crew and Cal Fire delivered S-212 Chainsaw training and certification to those workers. Additionally, the U.S. Forest Service partnered with the County during the project planning phase for the Lake City and Cedar Pass Campground projects and provided heavy equipment support when needed.

AFWD staff worked with all partners to facilitate these projects and provided job search and career guidance support to the temporary workers after the project was completed. AFWD staff also worked with the County to network for employment opportunities within a number of county departments for the temporary workers. To date, a total of four NDWG temporary workers have found employment with Modoc County departments including Public Works, Roads and Agriculture. Four other workers were placed in employment within the private sector and federal government and AFWD continues to support the remaining job seekers. The NDWG temporary job creation program provided the opportunity for these temporary workers to add to their skills sets while earning income, helped them to find employment after the project was completed and gave Modoc County a labor force to repair storm damage. NDWG is a Win-Win for all!

Thomas Garner with S-212 Chainsaw Certificate
A Stepping Stone for the Long Term Unemployed

The National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) temporary job creation program for the Winter Storms of 2019 in Modoc County was a stepping stone for long term unemployed workers. After completing work on the NDWG project with the Modoc County worksite workers were assisted by Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) staff in finding full time employment.

Josh Hayes came to AFWD requesting assistance with job search after trying on his own for many months to find full time employment. His Career Center Advisor suggested the NDWG temporary job program as a means to provide him with income while he continued to search for full time work. Josh made the most of his time on the NDWG project, impressing his supervisor with his work ethic. Through networking between AFWD and Modoc County departments, Josh was recommended by his Modoc County NDWG worksite supervisor for a full time position with the County Agriculture department, and he was hired as a Weed Sprayer.

After moving to Modoc County, Anthony Davies had struggled to find full time work. He also came to AFWD after months of job searching on his own and requested assistance. Like Josh, Anthony was looking for a means to earn income and expressed interest in the NDWG program. With guidance and career counseling from his AFWD Career Center Advisor, Anthony determined that due to personal reasons relocating back to his hometown and family support would be the best plan for him after successfully completing the NDWG project. Anthony relocated and quickly found a full time position working for Sac Val Plumbing in Sacramento.

Both Josh and Anthony expressed gratitude for AFWD assistance and stated that the NDWG temporary job creation program was a turning point in their lives for the better and a stepping stone to a brighter future.
Modoc County

One-Stop Visitors: 1,237
Business Serviced: 59
Business Services: 225

AFWD Clients Enrolled: 1,900

Unemployment Rate (As of: May 2020) 11%