

**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Iowa Workforce Development Foundation Receives Walmart Foundation Grant**

DES MOINES - The Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) Foundation received a \$75,000 grant from the Walmart Foundation to promote career opportunities for women. The grant will be used to establish the Women's Occupational Matching and Networking (WOMaN) Project, an initiative designed to empower low-income women with families through education about Non-Traditional Occupations (NTOs), which traditionally pay higher wages and will promote self-sufficiency, reducing the need to rely on human services programs, such as Food Assistance, for basic living needs.

The U.S. Department of Labor defines NTOs as ones in which less than 25% of all workers nationwide are female. Typically, these include jobs in construction, advanced manufacturing, and logistics, and usually require an educational background that is more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year college degree.

"Our intent is to educate women about the availability of NTOs and higher wage earning opportunities in Iowa, especially in the construction skilled trades where the State has labor shortages," stated Wahlert. "The issue of equality for women in the workforce has always been an important issue to me as I have unfortunately witnessed the disparate effects on women, particularly those in non-traditional careers."

A recent Gender Wage Equity Study compiled by Iowa Workforce Development confirms that female hourly wage earners in Iowa make 25% less than men, and salaried women earn 19.4% less. A primary reason for this disparity is that women tend to select female-dominated career fields that pay less, while men tend to select higher paid, male-dominated occupations.

Wahlert said, "IWD has been listening closely to representatives from the construction industries who indicate that the recruitment of women is an important issue. Master Builders of Iowa has been a close partner with us in the development of the WOMaN Project with the intention of recruiting, training, and hiring as many women as possible into construction occupations that pay middle class wages."

The Project will provide comprehensive employment workshops in Waterloo, Ottumwa, Davenport, and Des Moines. Locations were selected based on areas with the highest occupational need for apprentices in the skilled trades and that also had the highest number of women who can serve as mentors. The workshops will also feature opportunities provided by the Skilled Iowa Initiative, which was launched by Governor Branstad in 2012, and will include information on how to obtain a National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), appropriate use of personal and digital networking, resume writing, and interviewing for NTOs.

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