



Iowa Institute for
Cooperatives

CO-OPVIEWS

News and information for the benefit of Iowa cooperatives.

March 2023 Vol. 54, No. 1

Developing Leaders - A Critical Investment

Rick Kievits, Director of Cooperative Development

The industries we serve are highly dynamic, with evolving competition and constant global change. Our cooperatives have responded to this turmoil by going through tremendous growth and consolidation. Simultaneously, the labor market has seen enormous changes, limiting availability of staff. One question that is on everyone's mind; "How can cooperatives continue to be successful and grow in this environment?" We believe, one way is by investing in leadership development.

Leadership development is to equip our staff with tangible skills, both "hard" and "soft," required to deliver effective performance, and lead a highly motivated team. It is an investment in employees that directly addresses company growth and performance, decreasing employee turnover, and improving employee morale. And, our patrons benefit from improved quality of service they receive. A win-win-win.

Identifying and pursuing ways to enhance the development of staff and teams are passions of mine, which is why I took the role of Director of Cooperative Development last year.

Shortly after I started, I connected with my friend Jim Summers, Iowa State University Ivy College of Business faculty member, to discuss a partnership in developing a Cooperative Leadership Development Program. It was apparent

that our personality styles and ideologies made for a good partnership, and we got to work.

Our work began with Heartland Cooperative, a co-op with a pre-existing focus on leadership development. After several meetings with them, we built a comprehensive program tailored to Heartland's needs.

"Heartland typically sees 20-25 retirements each year, so things can change very quickly," states Craig Mommer, Director Human Resources with Heartland Cooperative. "Identifying and preparing the leaders of tomorrow and staying ahead of the leadership changes are critical to our success."

One of the key goals we wanted to create in a leadership program is to provide a broad range of tangible skills which will immediately impact a managers' effectiveness. We focus on both "hard" and "soft" skills. Our program builds these skills through learning in class, applying it to work and deliberate action!

The hard skills look at strategy, financial literacy, decision making, performance and change management, while "softer skills" focus on conflict management, influence, delegation and accountability. Each session is hands-on and offers dialogue and brainstorming.

We realize however, that the real work is done outside of the classroom, and follow-through had to be built into the program.

A few ways we have addressed this challenge is (1) by having monthly meetings with the managers' supervisors, (2) having each manager commit to action items related to the topics discussed, and (3) starting each session sharing stories of experiences (*what have they tried since last time*).

Besides the follow-through built into the program, here are some other items that make this program unique:

- ♦ Jim Summers brings an extensive amount of research, teaching and experience, which focuses on tweaking little behaviors over time that leads to performance gains.
- ♦ One-on-one coaching and assessment. The program begins with assessments taken by the manager and a manager's supervisor. Each manager also receives three 60-minute one-on-one coaching sessions.
- ♦ Blend of virtual and face-to-face. Jim and I value face-to-face, but realize it doesn't always make the most sense given the demanding nature of the business. There are a few sessions that are virtual.
- ♦ This isn't a canned program. We build each program to meet the needs of our members, which is done over several months of interviews and discussions. These in depth meetings enhance the effectiveness of a program for their specific needs, and allows for us to pivot based on feedback.



Heartland Cooperative's Leadership Development Class in table discussions with their peers.



Heartland Cooperative's first class to benefit from IIC's Leadership Development Program.

To learn more about this program and how it could benefit your cooperative, contact Rick Kievits (515-231-1929).

2023 Co-op Day on Capitol Hill

Despite the snow sending many people home from the state capitol, Iowa Institute for Cooperatives met with legislators from across the state on February 15 and 16 to discuss important issues to the co-op system. During a legislative reception on Wednesday night, we heard from Attorney General, Brenna Bird, and state Senators, Kerry Gruenhagen (R-Walcott) and Dan Zumbach (R-Ryan).

On Thursday morning, members went to the capitol to further discuss important issues like commercial vehicle tort reform and agriculture in the state of Iowa. Members also had the opportunity to meet with Speaker of the House, Pat Grassley (R-New Hartford) and Sec. of Agriculture, Mike Naig.

Thank you to our members who made the trip and a big thank you to Land O'Lakes for their continued sponsorship of these legislative events.



Above on left is Neal Keppy in conversation with Rep. Derek Wulf (right) at the Iowa Institute for Cooperative's legislative reception.



IIC members and legislative representatives gather for the reception. Left to right, Rep. Phil Thompson, Ed Den Beste, Spkr. of the House, Pat Grassley, Rep. Barb Kniff-McCulla, Rep. Cindy Golding, Dave Huper, Rep. Derek Wulf, Rep. Jacob Bossman, and Rep. Mike Bergan.



IIC members have a moment to meet with Rep. Bill Gustoff on Capitol Hill. Left to right, Ron Balek, Rep. Bill Gustoff, Tracy Gathman, Marcus Spotts, Ed Westra, and Hank VanderWaal.



A moment in the Rotunda on Capitol Hill with Rep. Elinor Levin on the left with Rueben Skow, Brian Thilges, Steve Breitbach, Ed Westra, and Tom Shatek.



Left to right, Rep. Charley Thomson takes some time with IIC members Steve Breitbach and Tom Shatek.



Iowa to Receive Funding for EV Charging Infrastructure



*Contributed by Ethan Hohenadel,
Director of Regulatory Affairs
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Electric vehicles (EVs) continue to grow in popularity, with no end in sight. In fact, EV sales jumped 65% from 2021 to 2022 in the U.S. Several new electric cars, trucks, and SUVs are set to hit the market in the years ahead, bringing impressive performance features. To support all these new EVs on the road, it's imperative for Iowa to provide sufficient charging infrastructure for both short- and long-range travelers.

As part of the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA),

\$7.5 billion in federal funds were authorized to support the continued development of EV chargers under the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program. The NEVI program provides funding to states to deploy EV charging infrastructure in support of the electrification of transportation. To receive funding through the NEVI Formula Program, states were required to develop an Infrastructure Deployment Plan (IDP) which outlined their planned utilization of the funding.

The Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT), with the assistance of the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA), developed and submitted the Iowa Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Deployment Plan (Iowa EVIDP), which was approved. The state of Iowa has been allocated approximately \$51.4 million in NEVI funding which will be made available over a five-year span. The grant application process is expected to open this spring and grant decisions are expected to be announced this summer.

There are specific requirements to participate in the NEVI program. First, the EV charging equipment must be open to the general public. Use of the EV charger cannot be restricted based upon any criteria. Second, each EV charging

port must be always capable of sustained charging of at least 150 kW DC. Finally, there must be at least 4 EV charging ports installed at the same location.

Additionally, the NEVI program prioritizes installation of EV chargers along Alternative Fuel Corridors (AFCs). In Iowa, the identified AFCs are I-29, I-35, I-80 and I-380. The goal is to place NEVI-compliant EV chargers within one mile of the AFC and spaced no more than 50 miles apart along the AFC. Once this has been accomplished, NEVI funding may be used to support EV chargers installed at other locations.

Iowa currently has three NEVI-compliant EV chargers installed along the AFCs; 29 other EV chargers are installed along the AFCs which could be upgraded to become NEVI-compliant. Additionally, the Iowa EVIDP identified specific exits along the AFCs where gaps must be filled to meet the 50-mile minimum separation criterion. The funding made available through the NEVI program likely has the ability to drastically improve the availability of DC fast chargers in Iowa.

For more information about the Iowa EVIDP or to sign up to receive updates on the plan, visit iowadot.gov/iowaevplan.



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IIC Welcomes New Board Members

WIL MANWEILER & BRIAN LARSEN JOIN IIC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We are pleased to introduce two new additions to Iowa Institute's Board of Directors. The board consists of member directors, manager directors, regional members and sector-specific members who represent different regions and industries across Iowa. This year, we have a new member director and manager director.

Wil Manweiler, general manager of Dunkerton Co-op Elevator, will represent the Northeast District as a manager director. Wil lives near Sumner, Iowa, where he and his wife, Karen, raised their four children—and the livestock that came with their kids' involvement in 4-H and FFA.

Wil has been involved in the Dunkerton Co-Op system for 24 years, and he is in his seventh year of serving as general manager. Managing a single-location cooperative, Wil brings a unique perspective and represents an important sector of co-ops.

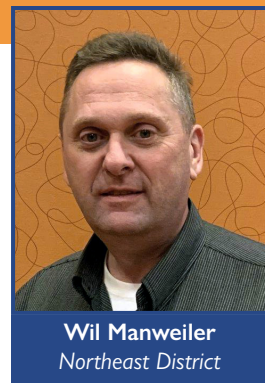
Wil's background extends from corporate to cooperative. After graduating from Iowa State University, Wil began working for Cargill before transitioning back home and into the world of co-ops. As Wil's experiences have grown over the years, his driving force has remained the same: to serve the member-owners of cooperatives.

This interest will remain at the forefront for Wil as he takes on his new role with the IIC Board of Directors and makes decisions on behalf of Iowa cooperatives.

Brian Larsen, owner of BL Farms Inc., is joining the Board of Directors as a member director representing Southeast Iowa. Brian is familiar with this region, and all areas of the state, as he enjoys traveling the back roads of Iowa with his wife, Sally, and kids. Brian and Sally have three sons, who are all grown and married, and three grandchildren.

Brian's co-op experience is multi-faceted, as he is currently vice president of Minerva Valley Telephone Co.'s Board of Directors, along with serving as an associate director and board member for Key Co-op for the past four years.

Brian is committed to learning in order to make educated decisions in the best interest of IIC members. Brian says that he feels board members are responsible for making sure members' of co-ops are financially sound and managed responsibly, and board members need to think of the members when making decisions. Through his involvement with IIC, Brian is looking forward to learning more about cooperatives across other industries.



Wil Manweiler
Northeast District



Brian Larsen
Southeast District