NAWB SELECTS 2015 NATIONAL EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS
Awards Honor Excellence in Workforce Investment Board Innovations, Business Leadership

Washington, D.C.– The National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB), the membership organization and advocate for more than 550 workforce investment boards (WIBs) nationwide and their network of America’s Job Centers, has announced the 2015 winners of its annual WIB Excellence Award and W.O. Lawton Business Leadership Award.

The WIB Excellence Award honors a WIB that has demonstrated an ongoing ability to develop comprehensive workforce solutions and innovations for its community by creating proactive program initiatives, engaging businesses, diversifying funding, and ensuring accountability. This year’s winner is the Arapahoe/Douglas Workforce Investment Board in southeastern Colorado. “The Arapahoe/Douglas WIB not only fulfills and exceeds its Workforce Investment Act (WIA) responsibilities, but also develops partnerships, services, and initiatives that go beyond WIA and serve the entire community,” said NAWB President and CEO Ron Painter. In Program Year 2013, each public dollar spent by the Arapahoe/Douglas WIB returned $24.66 to the community in value-add earnings. Peers in the region are replicating a number of successful initiatives launched by Arapahoe/Douglas WIB.

The W.O. Lawton Business Leadership Award honors a business or business organization that made the commitment of time, money, and leadership to make their community’s workforce and economy more vibrant and has gone above and beyond to be a full partner in their local Workforce Investment Board’s endeavors. This year, two nominations stood out -- one for a large, international corporation and the other for a small precision machine shop -- each of which were impressive in describing contributions that impact and elevate workforce development in their local economies.

Ford Motor Company’s Kansas City Assembly Plant in Claycomo, Missouri, is a co-winner of the W.O. Lawton Business Leadership Award. This Ford manufacturing plant is the world’s largest, producing the F-150 and the Transit van. Since 2010, Ford has invested $1.4 billion into the plant, hiring more than 2,500 workers to bring the total workforce to more than 6,000. It works closely with the Kansas City and Vicinity Workforce Investment Board (KCV WIB), relying exclusively on KCV WIB career centers as its primary recruitment partner. Likewise, the plant’s supply chain businesses use KCV WIB career centers for hiring and on-the-job training. This Ford plant invests heavily in its workforce, offering in-depth training experiences prior to employment and while on the job. It also offers skills programs to high school students, internship
opportunities, accelerated credential training programs, and an associate's degree program in automotive technology.

The other co-winner of the **W.O. Lawton Business Leadership Award** is VSS, Inc., of Greenfield, Massachusetts. In fall 2011, faced with turning away business for lack of enough skilled workers, Steve Capshaw, Owner and CEO of precision machine shop VSS, Inc., took the lead in forming a partnership of area manufacturing employers to provide inspiration, guidance, and support for a major renovation and upgrade of the Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) Machine Technology Program. VSS’s initial investment of $213,000 in donations and countless hours of time led to more than $1 million in investment and a full-fledged, state-of-the-art training program in advanced manufacturing, not only for secondary students, but also for adults.

“All three of these organizations are role models for their strategic initiatives, collaborative efforts, and relentless drive for success,” said NAWB President and CEO Ron Painter. “Their workforce system partnerships are not only valued, but essential to creating economic opportunity in their communities.”

Winners will be recognized at the **NAWB Annual Forum**, March 28-31, 2015, in Washington, D.C. The Forum is NAWB’s premier event, which brings together leaders in workforce development, economic development, education, business, and industry. During the conference, attendees seek solutions to common challenges in maintaining a skilled workforce, designing education and training programs, and ensuring that businesses have the talent they need to remain competitive. This year’s Forum prepares attendees to demonstrate vision, leadership, and impact in their communities under the framework of new Federal legislation: the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). For information or to register, visit [www.NAWB.org/Forum](http://www.NAWB.org/Forum).

**About the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB)**

The National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) connects workforce development professionals, Workforce Investment Board members, and policymakers with the knowledge, training, and tools to help make informed, smart decisions about how to invest in workforce strategies that advance the economic health of their communities through a skilled, competitive workforce. For more information on NAWB, visit [www.nawb.org](http://www.nawb.org), and to see how investments in workforce development keep Americans working, go to [http://www.WorkforceInvestmentWorks.com](http://www.WorkforceInvestmentWorks.com).

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