



National Retail Workforce Development Professionals Converge in Des Moines for Career Pathways Workshops and Visit to Midwest Grocer Hy-Vee

October 23, 2018 – Des Moines, IA – Central Iowa Works and the National Fund for Workforce Solutions will serve as hosts to Hope Street Group's (HSG) Retail Opportunity Network (RON) fall convening on November 7 and 8. RON is a cadre of more than 60 organizations developing innovative approaches to advance frontline retail workers and is supported by the Walmart Foundation. This fall convening of the RON entitled *From Preparation to Practice: Transformation of the Retail Ecosystem* will join more than 100 professionals, who interact with and design career pathways for frontline retail workers, in both candid and facilitated discussions on system change and the transformation of work in retail for incumbent frontline workers; and actionable steps toward preparing for change within their own organizations around learning, signaling, and employer engagement.

According to a 2018 report by Central Iowa Works and the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, the Des Moines region's total retail industry employment makes up a larger share of the area's total workforce (23.1%) than either the statewide (21.6%) or national (21.7%) levels. This makes the capital city a fitting spot for convening the RON. Pat Steele, Director of Central Iowa Works said, "Our retail industry is a huge part of our region's economy. Yet, employers are struggling to find skilled, front-line talent and employees are trying to find career opportunities that provide long-term financial stability. By coming together to work on these challenges, we can find new solutions that will help our community grow for the future."

In addition to the networking, brainstorming and action planning that marks all virtual and face-to-face collaborations within the RON, the attendees of this convening – representatives from nationally, regionally and locally-operating organizations from more than 30 states, including the Aspen Institute, National Retail Federation Foundation, Jobs for the Future, and Credential Engine – will have the opportunity to visit sites operated by Iowa-based Hy-Vee, an employee-owned chain of more than 245 supermarkets located in Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Hy-Vee was founded in 1930 in Beaconsfield, Iowa.

Optional site visits on November 7 will include Hy-Vee's Training and Education Center as well as the Urbandale Hy-Vee, which is one of the largest Hy-Vee supermarkets in central Iowa. Interacting with workers at multiple stages of this business will prompt site visitors to consider what developed skills and best practices modeled by Hy-Vee might be applied to their own local contexts.

"As one of the top grocery retailers in the U.S., we pride ourselves on our employees and commitment to customer service," said Sailu Timbo, Hy-Vee's Director of Diversity. "Our consistency in delivering top-notch experiences to our customers is key to our business and who we are as a company. We look forward to hosting this group of attendees and showcasing two locations that are instrumental to our training and education programs."

November 8 meetings and workshops at the convening will include a keynote speaker on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the workplace, Jerry L. Hawkins, Director of the Dallas Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation. Says Hawkins, "Focusing on equity in the workplace provides opportunities for all of us to see our everyday environments and diverse people inside them in new and inclusive ways. I am honored and look forward to sharing my insights with members at the 2018 Retail Opportunity Network fall convening." Follow-up breakout sessions after the keynote are designed to further the work of the RON's members.

In-person collaboration will be amplified through social media participation on Twitter and LinkedIn using the #RetailOpportunity hashtag, inviting deeper insights from workforce stakeholders across the country that will deepen the learning and understanding acquired over these two days.

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About:

[Hope Street Group](#) (HSG) is a national nonprofit that strives to ensure every American has access to economic opportunity. Learn more about HSG's Retail Opportunity Network (RON) and its 60+ member organizations [here](#).

Hy-Vee, Inc. is an employee-owned corporation operating more than 245 retail stores across eight Midwestern states with sales of \$10 billion annually. The supermarket chain is synonymous with quality, variety, convenience, healthy lifestyles, culinary expertise and superior customer service. Hy-Vee ranks in the Top 10 Most Trusted Brands and has been named one of America's Top 5 favorite grocery stores. The company's more than 80,000 employees provide "A Helpful Smile in Every Aisle" to customers every day. For additional information, visit www.hy-vee.com.

[Central Iowa Works](#) (CIW), an initiative of United Way of Central Iowa, is working to close the skills gap and meet the needs of employers by helping them to recruit and hire qualified workers, while addressing the needs of job seekers by helping them get trained and hired for real jobs with pathways for growth.

[National Fund for Workforce Solutions](#) is a national network promoting economic opportunity and prosperous communities through investment and innovation. Based in Washington D.C., National Fund partners with philanthropy, employers, workers, public and private community organizations, and more than 30 regional collaboratives to invest in skills, improve systems, and generate good jobs. The National Fund supports civic and business leaders in promoting evidence-based practices and policies that build shared prosperity.

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