



Workforce Innovation Awards

2020 Awards

The **Workforce Innovation Awards** (formerly known as the *Salute to the Leadership Awards*) were created by the NASWA Board of Directors to provide emphasis on the achievements of each NASWA award and focus on states' innovations in workforce, while encouraging states to participate. Below is the full schedule with award winners named for all NASWA Workforce Innovation Awards:

[View 2020 Nominees & Past Winners and Nominees](#)

Winter Policy Forum (Winter)

The Winter Workforce Innovation Awards were presented during the Winter Policy Forum in Washington, D.C., February 12, 2020.

- **Merrill Baumgardner Innovation in Information Technology Award** - [Washington State Employment Security Department - Paid Family and Medical Leave Technology Platform](#). This award honors a state demonstrating excellence in the field of information technology.
- **Data Insights and Innovations Award** - [Florida Department of Economic Opportunity - Data Analytics Tool](#) and [Nevada Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation - Demographic Reporting Enhancement Tool](#). This award honors a state workforce agency, or partnership involving a state workforce agency, for achievements related to labor market and workforce information.
- **William J. Harris Equal Opportunity Award** - [Washington State Employment Security Department - Equal Opportunity Officer Team](#). This award recognizes a State, or partnership involving a State, for an innovative workforce-related program, project, or initiative which results in significant contributions towards the achievement of equal opportunity and nondiscrimination.
- **Pinnacle Award for Business Development** - [Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry - Pennsylvania Apprenticeship and Training Office](#). This award honors a state

workforce agency (or their partnership) for an innovative business services initiative, framework, or effort of national impact, that addresses the health of businesses at one or several stages (growth, maintenance, downsizing) and results in significant positive impacts for businesses.

- **Pinnacle Award for Workforce Development** - [Colorado Department of Labor and Employment - Colorado Works Subsidized Training and Employment Program](#). This award recognizes a state (or their partnership) for an innovative workforce project, strategy or initiative that involves assisting certain or all customers with career services and/or the attainment of in-demand skills and credentials, and which results in significant contributions towards the achievement of opportunity for customers.

Veterans Conference (Summer)

- **Mark Sanders Exceptional Service to Veterans Award** (Recognizes exceptional service to Veterans, with special emphasis on those having Significant Barriers to Employment)

Workforce Summit (Fall)

The Fall Workforce Innovation Awards will be presented during the Workforce Summit. The State Excellence Award and the National Business of the Year Award will both be presented during the awards ceremony. **All Workforce Innovation Awards presented during the association year will be highlighted during the Workforce Innovation Awards.**

- **State Excellence Award** (Recognizes a state for a workforce-related program, project, or initiative, which innovatively addresses an issue or challenge, and results in significant improvement of service or performance)
- **National Business of the Year Award** (Recognizes a business that demonstrates outstanding accomplishments resulting in a positive impact on its workforce, industry, and community, and for its support and use of the state or local public workforce system)

2019 Awards

- **Merrill Baumgardner Innovation in Information Technology Award** - [Idaho Department of Labor - Interstate Connection Network Relay](#). The Baumgardner Award is presented annually to a state demonstrating excellence in the field of information technology.
- **Data Insights and Innovations Award** - [Montana Department of Labor and Industry - LMInformer Consortium](#)

(partner states: Arkansas, Michigan, Nevada, Ohio, and Virginia). The Data Insights Award honors a state workforce agency, or partnership involving a state workforce agency, for achievements related to labor market and workforce information.

- **William J. Harris Equal Opportunity Award** - [Indiana Department of Workforce Development - Hoosier Initiative for Re-Entry Virtual Job Fair](#). The Harris Award honors a State, or partnership involving a State, for an innovative workforce-related program, project, or initiative which results in significant contributions towards the achievement of equal opportunity and nondiscrimination.
- **Pinnacle Award for Business Development** - [MassHire Department of Career Services - MassHire BizWorks](#). The Business Development Award honors a state workforce agency (or their partnership), for an innovative business services initiative, framework, or effort of national impact, that addresses the health of businesses at one or several stages (growth, maintenance, downsizing) and results in significant positive impacts for businesses.
- **Pinnacle Award for Workforce Development** - [Arizona Department of Economic Security- Second Chance Center Program](#). (Honors a state (or their partnership) for an innovative workforce project, strategy or initiative that involves assisting certain or all customers with career services and/or the attainment of in-demand skills and credentials, and which results in significant contributions towards the achievement of opportunity for customers)
- **Mark Sanders Award** - [Yuba County America's Job Center of California](#). The Sanders Award recognizes exceptional service to Veterans, with a special emphasis on those with Significant Barriers to Employment.
- **State Excellence Award** - [South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation- Expanding apprenticeships in South Dakota](#). The State Excellence Award recognizes a state for a workforce-related program, project, or initiative, which innovatively addresses an issue or challenge, and results in significant improvement of service or performance.
- **National Business of the Year Award** - [Copper River Seafoods, Alaska](#). The National Business of the Year Award recognizes a business that demonstrates outstanding accomplishments resulting in a positive impact on its workforce, industry and community, and for its support and use of the state or local public workforce system.

2018 Awards

- **Award of Excellence in UI Interstate Benefit Claims** - [Myran Valenzuela, Arizona Department of Economic Security](#). The UI IB Award of Excellence recognizes individuals for their exceptional efforts on the national level for promoting policies that encourage

cooperation among states in managing UI claims.

- **Award of Merit for Distinguished National Service in UI Interstate Benefit Claims** - [Doug Hopper, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services](#). The Award of Merit recognizes individuals for their efficient administration of managing unemployment insurance claims when they cross state boundaries.
- **Mark Sanders Award** – [Washington State - Joint Base Lewis McChord \(JBLM\) WorkSource Affiliate office](#). The Sanders Award recognizes exceptional service to Veterans, with a special emphasis on those with Significant Barriers to Employment.
- **State Excellence Award** - [Indiana Department of Workforce Development - Hoosier Initiative for Re-entry \(HIRE\) program](#). The State Excellence Award recognizes a state for a workforce-related program, project, or initiative, which innovatively addresses an issue or challenge, and results in significant improvement of service or performance.
- **National Business of the Year Award** - [Newport News Shipbuilding \(NNS\), a Virginia-based defense contractor](#). The National Business of the Year Award recognizes a business that demonstrates outstanding accomplishments resulting in a positive impact on its workforce, industry and community, and for its support and use of the state or local public workforce system.

2017 Awards

- **William J. Harris Award** – Terri Slone Director of Administrative Services & State of Nebraska Equal Opportunity Officer Nebraska Department of Labor. The William J. Harris Award was established to recognize excellence in the field of equal opportunity (EO).
- **Merrill Baumgardner Award** – Brett Richard IT IS Manager, Software Development Idaho Department of Labor. The Merrill Baumgardner Award is presented annually to an individual who has demonstrated excellence in the field of information technology in a workforce agency.
- **Vladimir Chavrid Award** – Robert Uhlenkott Chief Research Officer and Labor Market Information Director Oregon Employment Department. The NASWA Vladimir Chavrid Memorial Award recognizes excellence in the field of Labor Market Information (LMI).
- **Mark Sanders Award** – Arapahoe/Douglas Works! Workforce Center, Colorado. The Mark Sanders Award recognizes exceptional service to Veterans, with a special emphasis on those with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBEs).
- **The James F. Walls Team Award** – District of Columbia Department of Employment Services Project Empowerment Team. The James F. Walls Workforce Agency Team Award honors a local office, one-stop center, central office division or unit, or a special

team, which demonstrates extraordinary service in its assignment area, functions, local community, or area.

- **James F. Walls Employee Award** – Stacey Shegrud Workforce Consultant Idaho Department of Labor. The James F. Walls Workforce Agency Employee Award honors an employee whose conduct demonstrates outstanding dedication to customers and colleagues, and extraordinary service to the local community.
- **The Eagle Award** – Celina Bussey Cabinet Secretary New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions. The Eagle Award honors individuals who soar to new heights in their efforts to serve employers and workers in the United States.
- **National Business of the Year Award** – McCain Foods. The NASWA National Business of the Year Award recognizes a business that demonstrates outstanding accomplishments resulting in a positive impact on its workforce, industry, and community. Recipients of this award are also recognized for the business' support and use of the state or local public workforce system.
- **State Excellence Award for Leadership (SEAL) Award** – Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. The SEAL Award honors a state for a workforce-related program, project, or initiative, which addresses an issue or challenge, and results in significant improvement of service or performance.

2016 Awards

- **William J. Harris Award** – Equal Opportunity Unit of the Missouri Division of Workforce Development, with special recognition to Danielle Smith, State Equal Opportunity Officer; Kristin Funk, Disability Coordinator; Isaac Hagan, Research Analyst II; Angela Burke, DED Legal; and Yvonne Wright, MO Vocational Rehabilitation
- **Merrill Baumgardner Award** – John Wissler, Deputy Director, Application Development, Washington Employment Security Department
- **Vladimir Chavrid Award** – Spencer L. Wong, Chief, Labor Market Information Division, California Employment Development Department
- **Mark Sanders Award** – Ohio Means Jobs, Columbus-Franklin County One-Stop Center, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
- **The James F. Walls Team Award** – UI Online Project Team, California Employment Development Department
- **James F. Walls Employee Award** – E. Janie Small, Employment and Training Specialist III, Machias Career Center, Maine Department of Labor
- **The Eagle Award** – Melisa Stark, Program Administrator, Utah Department of Workforce Services
- **State Excellence Award for Leadership (SEAL) Award** – Utah Department of Workforce

Services

- **President's Award (WIOA Pillars)** – Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA), U.S. Representative Virginia Foxx (R-NC), U.S. Representative John Kline (R-MN), U.S. Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA)

2015 Awards

- **The President's Award** – The National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) and The National Governors Association (NGA);
- **The State Excellence Award for Leadership (SEAL) Award** – The State of Florida with Special Recognition to The Florida Reemployment Assistance Fraud Intelligence Rating and Rules Engine (FIRRE);
- **The Eagle Award** – Hayley McKee, Policy Administrator, Wyoming Department of Workforce Services;
- **The James F. Walls Employee Award** – Bonnie Millet, Employment Counselor, Utah General Assistance Team, Utah Department of Workforce Services;
- **The James F. Walls Team Award** – WorkSource Everett Reemployment Services Team, Washington Employment Security Department;
- **The Mark Sanders Award for Exceptional Service to Disabled Veterans** – Franklin Hampshire Career Center, Northampton, MA, Massachusetts Department of Career Services;
- **The Merrill Baumgardner Award** – Elizabeth Carver, Employment System Support Program Manager, Next Generation Labor Exchange Project Manager, Workforce Development Division, Utah Department of Workforce Services;
- **The Vladimir Chavrid Award** – Raj Jindal, OIS Director, Louisiana Workforce Commission;
- **The William J. Harris Equal Opportunity Award** – The Skill Source Center Partners, Prince William, VA, Virginia Employment Commission; and,
- **The NASWA National Business of the Year Award** – STIHL, Inc.

2014 Awards

- **President's Award** – Richard A. Hobbie, Ph.D., Executive Director, NASWA
- **SEAL Award** – The State of Florida with Special Recognition to the Honorable Rick Scott, Governor and the CareerSource Florida Network

- **Eagle Award** – Roger Bailie, Director of Finance (Posthumous), New York Department of Labor
- **James F. Walls Employee Award** – Eric McAbee, Local Veterans' Employment Representative, South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce
- **James F. Walls Team Award** – The Arkansas Department of Workforce Services' Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services (RES) Team
- **Merrill Baumgardner Award** – David Kyre, Director of Application Development & Technical Director, South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce
- **Vladimir Chavrid Award** – Tom Price, Business and Technology Applications Specialist, North Carolina Department of Commerce
- **NASWA National Business of the Year Award** – Schaeffler Group-INA

Click [here](#) to view the 2014 Salute to the Leadership.

2013 Awards

- **President's Award** – Larry E. Temple, Executive Director, Texas Workforce Commission
- **SEAL Award** – New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development: Hurricane Sandy Response Special recognition to the Honorable Harold Wirths
- **Eagle Award** – Roger Madsen, Director, Idaho Department of Labor
- **James F. Walls Employee Award** – Shalonda Sanders, Programs Manager/Area Manager, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission
- **James F. Walls Team Award** – Veterans' Outreach Reporting Team, Washington Employment Security Department Special recognition to Lisa Marsh, Director, Information Technology and Business Integration
- **Mark Sanders Award** – Job Service North Dakota Veterans Employment Team
- **Merrill Baumgardner Award** – Mohammed Jalaluddin, Director, Office of Technology Development and Innovation, Mississippi Department of Employment Security
- **William J. Harris Award** – Serafin "Jun" Colmenares, Executive Director, Hawaii Office of Language Access
- **William J. Harris Award** – Dwight Takamine, Director, Hawaii Department of Labor and Industrial Relations
- **Vladimir Chavrid Award** – George Putnam, Ph.D., Assistant Manager, Labor Market Information, Economic Information and Analysis, Illinois Department of Employment Security
- **NASWA National Business of the Year Award** – The Donlin Gold Team Special recognition to Stan Foo, General Manager

2012 Awards

- **President's Award** – Bill Warren, Executive Director, DirectEmployers
- **SEAL Award** – State of Wyoming, Honorable Joan Evans
- **Eagle Award** – Honorable Paul Trause, Commissioner, Washington State Employment Security Department
- **James F. Walls Employee Award** – Robert F. Singer, DVOP, Virginia Employment Commission
- **James F. Walls Team Award** – UI Modernization Project, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission
- **Mark Sanders Award** – Plymouth Massachusetts Career Center
- **Merrill Baumgardner Award** – John M. Fowler, UI IT Systems Manager, Texas Workforce Commission
- **William J. Harris Award** – Kintu Nnambi, Manager of Diversity, Inclusion and EO and ADA Coordinator
- **William J. Harris Award** – Honorable Paul Trause, Commissioner, Washington State Employment Security Department
- **Vladimir Chavrid Award** – Steve Saxton, Chief, Labor Market Information Division, California Employment Development Department
- **NASWA National Business of the Year Award** – U.S. Bancorp of Minneapolis