



## Physician Recruitment, Workforce Lead Healthcare Challenges



STORY ON PAGE 16

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**MARCH 6**  
Business Day in Des Moines  
DES MOINES

**MARCH 7-8**  
Leadership Iowa Session:  
Healthcare  
DUBUQUE

**MARCH 7**  
Connecting Statewide Leaders  
DUBUQUE

**MARCH 25**  
Nominations Open:  
Coolest Thing Made in Iowa

**APRIL 4-5**  
Leadership Iowa Session:  
Education  
GRINNELL

**MAY 2-3**  
Leadership Iowa Session:  
Economic Development &  
Workforce  
FOREST CITY

**JUNE 4-6**  
Taking Care of  
Business Conference  
QUAD CITIES (DAVENPORT)

**JUNE 4-6**  
Leadership Iowa:  
ABI Conference & Graduation  
QUAD CITIES (DAVENPORT)

**AUGUST 8-9**  
Executive Forum  
MASON CITY

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VISIT [WWW.IOWAABI.ORG](http://WWW.IOWAABI.ORG) AND CLICK THE "EVENTS" TAB FOR DETAILS ON ALL UPCOMING EVENTS.

Learn more about how ABI membership could benefit your company by visiting [www.iowaabi.org/membership/why-abi](http://www.iowaabi.org/membership/why-abi).

**FROM THE CHAIR:**

# Measuring Metrics, Celebrating Achievements, and Looking Ahead

Successful and thriving organizations excel by measuring key metrics, evaluating their progress towards goals, and actively pursuing ongoing improvement. As of February, which marks the eighth month in ABI's fiscal year, it is evident that the association is well on course to make this year one of its most successful ever.

One example of that success was seen in last month's Legislative Reception - one of the biggest and best yet. The Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General and legislators of both parties and both chambers participated. They attended because you, ABI members, engaged and interacted. On behalf of the board of directors, thank you for your participation.

We are also tracking success in other key ABI programs. Public policy, Foundation programs, and ABI member meetings and events are all surpassing metrics of past years.

Another key measure of success is based on delivering a terrific annual convention. I assure you that the 2024 conference is on track to be the best one ever! Make plans now to join your ABI colleagues in Davenport June 4-6 for the 2024 Taking Care of Business Conference. ABI's 121st annual meeting will

be something special and you do not want to miss it! Registration opens on February 22. To learn more, visit [www.ABITakingCareOfBusiness.com](http://www.ABITakingCareOfBusiness.com).

While you are finalizing your plans for the annual conference, you will also enjoy this edition of the ABI Business Monthly, our organization's monthly news magazine. Be sure to read our feature story about what is trending in healthcare.

We have briefly mentioned just a few of the programs ABI members enjoy and benefit from and there are many more. If you are a member, thank you. If your organization is not a member, I encourage you to reach out to learn more about the full slate of benefits ABI membership provides by calling (515) 280-8000 or via email:

- Chad Reece, Vice Chair: [creece@winnebagoind.com](mailto:creece@winnebagoind.com)
- Mike Ralston, President: [mralston@iowaabi.org](mailto:mralston@iowaabi.org)
- Nicole Crain, Executive Vice President: [ncrain@iowaabi.org](mailto:ncrain@iowaabi.org)

Together we can continue to help ensure a quality business environment in Iowa. **ABI**



**Chad Reece**  
ABI Vice Chair  
Winnebago Industries

**CAPITOL BUSINESS:**

## Healthcare at the Statehouse

Each year, employers that offer employee healthcare plans huddle with their healthcare plan administrators or insurers to select a plan for the upcoming year. As the costs in healthcare increase even status quo plans can come with unexpected additional cost and plan sponsors/employers must determine how to share the costs of plans between employee and employer or adjust the plan offerings.

Employer sponsored plans provide the money to pay insurers to administer plans, and to pay healthcare providers for their services. In the case of prescription pharmaceutical benefits, the insurers will hire the services of Pharmaceutical Benefits Managers (PBMs). These entities, representing all the covered employees across the breadth of the employer plans of the insurers, then use that market power to negotiate lower prices on drugs from pharmaceutical manufacturers and also manage the reimbursement of pharmacies that supply pharmaceuticals to covered employees.

Beyond inflationary costs, public policy at the state and federal levels can also influence the costs of plans. The ABI public policy team gets involved at the Iowa Statehouse to make sure public policy does not drive up the cost of sponsoring plans for

employers and the cost of care for employees.

During the 2022 legislative session pharmacies in Iowa asked for legislation they said was needed to financially assist independent rural pharmacies. ABI was neutral on the legislation upon its introduction and opposed the bill as the costs to employers and covered employees became known. ABI then endorsed the bill as sections of the bill supporting independent local pharmacies were preserved and provisions that increased costs for employers, and their employees, were eliminated.

This session, bills that specifically address pharmacies in Iowa are back, as well as bills that address all participants in healthcare delivery, including drug manufacturers, plan administrators, doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, and others.

ABI believes comprehensive legislation that reviews the whole of healthcare delivery is preferable to public policy that addresses only a narrow spectrum of healthcare. The ABI public policy team will review all healthcare policy that comes before the legislature guided by our adopted policy to ensure that employers can offer quality healthcare plans to their employees at costs that can be maintained. **ABI**



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**EVENT REWIND:**

# Legislative Briefing & Reception

Over 300 people gathered at the Iowa Events Center in Downtown Des Moines on Wednesday, January 10, as ABI hosted its annual Legislative Briefing and Reception.

The Legislative Briefing was highlighted by remarks from ABI Vice President Public Policy JD Davis, ABI Director Public Policy Brad Hartkopf, ABI President Mike Ralston, and ABI Executive Vice President Nicole Crain.

The ABI public policy team previewed the 2024 Iowa legislative session and unveiled ABI's 2024 legislative priorities: workforce, taxes, and regulatory reform. Attendees were challenged to get involved by participating in Business Day in Des Moines on March 6, signing up for a public policy committee, attending regional meetings in May, and donating to Iowa Industry Political Action Committee (IIPAC).

The Legislative Briefing was followed by the Legislative Reception where ABI members, legislators, and business leaders from all over the state took advantage of the opportunity to connect with state officials. The reception is one of the best-attended events of the legislative session and ABI's second-largest annual event. **ABI**



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## FROM THE FOUNDATION:

# Registration is Open for Business Horizons 2024

Business Horizons, a program of the Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI) Foundation, invites Iowa high school students to register for the “best week of summer” July 14-18 at Drake University.

Business Horizons enables students to confidently forge connections between concepts learned in the classroom through real-world application. The five-day program combines hands-on, entrepreneurial experiences with team-oriented challenges to demonstrate how business and leadership skills are applicable to any career.

In this action-packed week, students work in teams to identify a real-world problem to solve, then create and continuously refine a product or service as basis for a new business venture. At the end of the week, teams will participate in investor pitches, infomercial screenings, and a trade show in front of live judging panels. Iowa industry professionals are brought in to provide mentorship and facilitate dynamic workshops. Additional highlights include leadership development activities, local business tours, on-campus living experiences, and “after hours” socializing with new friends from across the state.

“Business Horizons is a place for students to express their strengths, develop

their leadership skills, and solve real-world problems their generation has the answers for,” said Jennifer Guttierrez, a student at Storm Lake High School and 2023 participant. When asked to share one interest she’s furthered after Business Horizons, Guttierrez brought up the topic of marketing. “I pay closer attention to advertising and have begun noticing different ways businesses promote their products and services. It’s neat to recognize their strategies, and it also reminds me that one thing marketing and leadership have in common is the importance of communicating effectively.” When asked what advice she would offer students considering attending, Guttierrez suggested that students embrace the unknown. “I was nervous the entire car ride to Business Horizons because this was outside of my comfort zone. Five days later during the car ride back home, I then knew that I shouldn’t be afraid to try new things anymore because you never know what doors may open, and either good or bad, you always learn from these experiences.”

“This program not only teaches but connects you with opportunities in Iowa,” said Maddox Doty, a former student at Central Lee High School, 2022 participant, and 2023 student ambas-

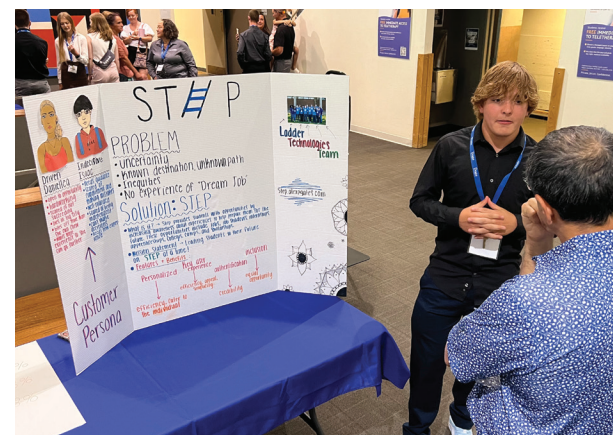
sador – a small group of peer mentors who return to the program a second year. When asked why he chose to return as an ambassador, Doty credited previous ambassadors as fueling his ambition. “Seeing how passionate my ambassadors were about every speaker and activity made me realize how much this program impacted them. Their actions inspired me to invest my full effort into getting as much out of this program as they did, and that was the biggest contributing factor to wanting to come back: to instill a similar feeling of motivation.” Now a full-time college student, Doty commented on how the program has helped prepare him for the adjustment of attending Iowa State University. “It’s a big campus with a lot of students, but I left Business Horizons much more open to meeting new people and understanding both the personal and professional benefits of networking.”

Business Horizons continues to serve as an economic catalyst for Iowa’s future workforce. From forward-thinking students who are eager to set themselves apart and thrive in new situations, to those who show leadership potential but are unsure of their direction after high school: everyone has something to gain from Business Horizons. **ABI**



**Kendall Antle**

Programs & Engagement Coordinator  
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## Business Horizons 2024

**WHO:** Iowa high school students currently in grades 9-12

**WHEN:** July 14-18

**WHERE:** Drake University

**PARTICIPATION FEE:** \$400\*

\*Includes all meals, lodging, and activities.

\*Register by May 27 to receive a \$50 discount. Need-based financial assistance is available and can be requested through the online registration form.

Registrations will be accepted through July 5 or until the program is filled. To learn more, nominate, or register students for the program, visit [www.BusinessHorizonsIowa.com](http://www.BusinessHorizonsIowa.com).

**WHAT'S TRENDING:**

# Navigate HR Trends in Healthcare With Key Insights

Caution reigns in 2024 as healthcare leaders prepare for the year ahead amidst uncertainty in the economy, the adoption of generative AI in the workplace, and an evolving relationship with a more informed workforce. Our HR experts examine three workplace trends to expect as you forge ahead into 2024.

## Employee Retention Amidst Economic Uncertainty

Improving retention isn't new to the healthcare industry, which is still dealing with impacts from the pandemic and the resulting high burnout levels. In fact, in the CDC's 2022 report "Health Workers Face a Mental Health Crisis," 44% of healthcare workers said they intended to look for a new job and 46% of workers reported feeling burnt out.

Renewed retention efforts in 2024,

however, can help you reduce the high costs of turnover and its negative impacts on productivity. Businesses with strong retention strategies – such as open communication and a focus on employee well-being – tend to have happier employees, which can have a positive impact on your bottom line.

## Generative AI in the Workplace

Generative AI caused a stir last year – enticing leaders with thoughts of increased productivity, yet alarming workers who feared they may be replaced. In 2024, HR leaders should develop policies and training so employees feel empowered to use (instead of fear) AI in a way that benefits your business but minimizes risks.

Training should include methods to assess bias within generative AI models and identify inaccurate content. If your

HR team adopts AI within hiring tools, be mindful that they aren't violating workplace laws in the process.

## Engagement With an Informed Workforce

Workers are more empowered than ever, partially due to easy access online to employment information or through viral social media posts on workplace trends that are often based on employee grievances.

It's essential that you understand your employees' rights, then ensure company handbooks and policies don't infringe on those rights. Fostering a culture that encourages open communication with managers, educates leaders about employment rights, and strengthens employee engagement can help you retain your most valuable team members for years to come. **ABI**



**Susan Crowder**

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COVER STORY FROM PAGE 11

# Physician Recruitment, Workforce Lead Healthcare Challenges

BY EMERY STYRON

As the new year gets rolling, dealing with workforce challenges, including physician and specialist recruitment, is a top priority, say executives at The Iowa Clinic and MercyOne, two major healthcare providers in Iowa.

"We know we need to have a strong healthcare workforce, to be the experts in the community," says Troy Cook, MercyOne, Division Director – Business Health Solutions, representing one of the largest multi-specialist physician group practices in Iowa.

Part of Livonia, Michigan-based Trinity Health, MercyOne provides services through Wheaton Franciscan Health – Iowa, offering care at Covenant Medical Center in Waterloo, Sartori Memorial Hospital in Cedar Falls and Mercy of Franciscan Sisters in Oelwein, as well as the Covenant Clinic at various locations in Iowa.

Filling gaps in the healthcare team can be challenging and calls for creativity, says Mr. Cook. "There are not an unlimited number of cardiologists" available to provide cardiac care, especially preventive care, for the state's aging population, he says. One innovation is utilizing remote patient monitoring and telehealth to use doctors' and specialists' time most effectively.

"We lean in a lot on technology," he says.

Tech is key to meeting the challenge of a shortage of counselors in the growing mental healthcare space, says Mr. Cook. MercyOne partners with the Carebridge Employee Assistance Program, which has counselors across the country who provide services via telehealth. "Patients don't have to wait weeks and weeks. It's been very successful and allows doctors of psychiatry to focus on more severe needs," Mr. Cook says.

"How can we get creative with recruiting difficult specialties when we don't have oceans or mountains to compete with?" asks Jodi Schweiger, The Iowa Clinic's Executive Director Business Development.

Endovascular neurosurgeons and gynecologic oncologists, for example, are the types of specialists critically needed in Iowa to lower wait times for patients to be seen by a physician hours away. These specialty physicians have years of education and residency and don't typically enter the workforce until they are in their 30s, so they tend to gravitate toward higher paying areas.

"We would love to have some grants or educational loan forgiveness opportunities awarded so we can make it attractive for these types of physicians to come to Iowa," says Ms. Schweiger. "We know Iowa is a wonderful state and has a ton to offer especially when it comes to cost of living."

It's not only physicians and specialists that are needed. "This I am sure is no surprise but since Covid, the data reveals that 100,00 nurses left the workforce during the pandemic and by 2027, almost one-fifth of the 4.5 million total Registered Nurses, intend to leave the workforce, threatening the national healthcare system at large if solutions are not enacted," says Ms. Schweiger.

The Iowa Clinic tackled the shortage of nurses and CMAs by starting and fully funding an internal, 20-week, self-paced Certified Medical Assistant program, finishing with a paid externship within The Iowa Clinic.

The largest physician owned multi-specialty group in Central Iowa, The Iowa Clinic employs more than 250 physicians and healthcare providers practicing in more than 40 specialties. The provider is recruiting heavily to fill new positions as it continues to grow. It has recently opened clinics in Grimes and Adel, expanded its clinic



in North Waukee, and is preparing to add a new multispecialty clinic in South Waukee with an ambulatory surgery center. The South Waukee location alone will need 20 additional clinical and support staff members, Ms. Schweiger says.

## Healthcare Culture Changes

The culture of healthcare has changed since the recent pandemic, say both Mr. Cook and Ms. Schweiger. The changes are both internal and external, extending to the ways employers view healthcare and the range of services consumers seek.

"There is not one singular lever but several levers that require time and dedication to achieve the best employee and patient experience in Central Iowa," says Ms. Schweiger. On the workplace culture side, The Iowa Clinic last year launched an employee feedback initiative, including engagement surveys, listening sessions and focus groups to identify areas of opportunities for efficiencies and improvements for both patients and employees. Other programs include a partnership effort focused on patient experience and quarterly financial bonuses tied to organizational goals.

"Covid brought a change in culture, especially in the area of mental health. It brought forward the opportunity to walk with each individual on their health journey," says Mr. Cook.

Mental health issues surfaced during the isolation of the pandemic and are continuing to be addressed, by both employers and individuals.

Recent changes in employer insurance plans are focused on the total health approach, "how mental health affects total health," he noted. "Employers are really digging in deeper on understanding and crafting benefits to fit employee needs."

"We've seen employers really looking to enhance their benefits. Companies are trying to get more creative (ask-

ing) 'How can I retain top talent, how can I recruit?'" says Ms. Schweiger. "We're seeing an uptick in high performance network, incentivizing employees to come to The Iowa Clinic for their care with a lower copay."

Acceptance of telehealth continues to grow in some areas, including in behavioral and mental health, but overall the number of telehealth visits is down since COVID. "We learned there are areas of need that aren't suited," she says.

Telehealth, however, is continuing to evolve. It can, for example, serve as an effective follow-up tool after an initial in-person visit. MercyOne is piloting a telehealth program to follow up on workplace injuries.

Mr. Cook and Ms. Schweiger also agree that people are tending to pay better attention to their health these days.

"Most people don't wake up and want to be unhealthy. They want to find as healthy a path as they can. They don't always have good information. People are getting back in the habit of preventive care," Mr. Cook says.

MercyOne works to help clients understand why that's important. "Once they have experience with the benefits of preventive care, they don't often steer away from that," says Mr. Cook.

The shift to back toward preventive care is apparent at the Iowa Clinic as well.

"I would say from COVID, we definitely saw a lag in care, people not going to doctors or getting routine screenings when they were due. We're having to work through a backlog," says Ms. Schweiger. "Coming out of COVID, we hit the ground running to make sure we're getting all our patients in and getting appropriate screening.

"Patients eager to get back in and have that face-to-face experience with physicians. We're about meeting the patient where they are and how they want to receive service. We've learned to really be flexible in how we deliver care." ABI

# The Iowa Clinic's South Waukee Campus: New Services, Ambulatory Surgery Center, and Patient Impact



This month, The Iowa Clinic will open the doors to their new South Waukee campus at 1025 Southeast Tallgrass Lane in Waukee. Jodi Schweiger, Executive Director of Business Development at The Iowa Clinic, answers your questions about the new facility.

## What Services Will be Offered at this New Location?

The Iowa Clinic is uniquely positioned to bring our model of family-focused, highly coordinated care to a larger location in Waukee. Conveniently located near Interstate 80, we hope to improve the lives of area residents and neighboring suburbs with quality medical providers across our 40+ specialties. Our South Waukee Campus will offer primary care, urgent care, physical therapy and radiology in addition to several other specialties and our ambulatory surgery center.

## What is an Ambulatory Surgery Center?

The ambulatory surgery center (or ASC) provides a convenient, comfortable, and cost-effective option for patients needing outpatient surgery. Procedures such as tonsil removal, appendix removal, ACL repair, colonoscopies, and more will be available at the ASC, meaning patients will not have to be hospitalized and can go home shortly after their procedure. Additionally, having a procedure completed at an ASC versus a traditional hospital setting can reduce the cost by 40-60% for patients.

Additionally, the facility will be home to a catheterization laboratory. This cath lab will offer a much more convenient and inexpensive option for patients needing minimally invasive heart surgeries and procedures.



JODI SCHWEIGER

patients traveling from other communities will have the convenient option to see their primary care provider, specialist, or have their outpatient procedure completed in one location without having to travel through the busy metro.

## I'm Currently an Iowa Clinic Patient. Will My Provider be Changing Locations?

To best serve our patients, some of our providers will be transitioning to the new South Waukee campus. If your provider(s) is moving, you will receive updated information in the mail.

If your provider is changing locations and you have a previously scheduled appointment, it will be automatically transferred to your provider's new location. There is no need to reschedule.

All other systems and insurance accepted will remain the same as our other locations.

## How Will this New Facility Impact Appointment Wait Times?

One of our goals with this new location is to increase access to our providers. We will be adding providers

## Why is This New Facility Needed?

While those living in the metro may have convenient access to healthcare, there is a definite need for those living in more rural areas. Because the South Waukee facility is located just off Interstate 80, patients

to our team to support this new location and will be able to serve even more patients.

## How is The Iowa Clinic Different From Any Other Healthcare Provider in the Metro?

The Iowa Clinic is locally owned by doctors living and working in the communities we serve. Why does this matter? Because decisions about patient care are determined by you and your physician, not a larger corporate entity. Independence and control of patient care brought us together in 1994, and it's what keeps us together today.

## When Will the New South Waukee Campus Open?

Our first appointments will take place on February 26! In the coming months, we will begin adding and transitioning new services to this location including our on-site laboratory and medical imaging. Again, if you are a current patient of The Iowa Clinic and your provider is changing locations, you will be notified before your scheduled appointment.

To learn more, visit [iowaclinic.com](http://iowaclinic.com) or follow along on our social media pages! **ABI**



## EXPERT ADVICE:

# Understanding Healthcare Costs – Three Must Know Factors

The cost of healthcare is the primary concern shared by our business customers across Iowa and South Dakota. The concern is real – healthcare costs are projected to increase 9–10 percent through 2026<sup>1</sup>.

Understanding what drives healthcare costs can help your business better manage this challenge.

There are a lot of factors pushing up healthcare costs, but among the most important are the ever-growing complexity of new treatments and diagnostic tools; the personalization needed to ensure a high quality, patient outcomes; and the specific care decisions healthcare providers make. All of these elements determine the total cost of care – or your organization's total spending on healthcare and health benefits for your employees and their families. Managing all the variables that impact the total cost of care for your organization can be extraordinarily complex. Finding balance between the cost, experience and patient outcome is our goal as a health insurance partner – ensuring your employees and their families get the right care, at the right time, at the ideal location.

Let's bring some order to this chaos. Employers should think about these key elements when managing healthcare affordability for their businesses:

**1. Network and benefit design:** Recognize and reward quality. Access to a broad array of healthcare providers and hospitals is the foundation of good healthcare. At Wellmark, our broad network of healthcare providers and strong, long-term relationships allow us to partner with providers to develop affordable and best-in-class solutions focused on positive health outcomes.

But access is only the first step. Looking forward, we must focus less on paying for quantity of services and much more on paying for quality of outcomes. Most healthcare providers operate on a fee-for-service model today – or quantity of services. However, in value-based payment models, providers are reimbursed based on the quality of care they deliver, which encourages proactive, preventive care that puts patient health at the center. Moving to value-based payment will require big changes in how providers practice medicine and how businesses structure their healthcare benefits, but the promise of lower costs and better outcomes is worth the effort.

**2. Promote evidence-based clinical programs:** Making sure your employees and their families, especially those



**Scott Sundstrom**

Vice President of Government Relations  
Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield

with chronic or high-cost conditions, get the right care, from the right provider, in the right place and at the right time is essential in controlling the total cost of care.

At Wellmark, we take a whole-person care approach in designing our clinical programs including medical, pharmacy and mental health for the most effective care at the lowest cost. We are committed to helping providers and consumers use resources effectively and get patients the right care quicker through continued innovation with utilization management programs.

**3. Engage employees and families:** Having your employees and their families play an active role in their health is mutually beneficial. At Wellmark, we are committed to ensuring your employees and their families have the tools and resources they need to take an active role in their well-being and get the most from their health benefits. This includes services like virtual health coaching or behavioral health specialists available 24/7.

Each of these components must work together to deliver the greatest benefit to both you and your employees. At Wellmark, we are committed to working with our clients to design the right solutions for their employees' health coverage needs while managing the cost to do so. **For more information and insights, visit [Wellmark.com/BlueAtWork](http://Wellmark.com/BlueAtWork).** ABI

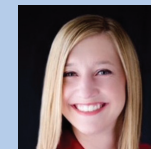
<sup>1</sup>The gathering storm: The threat to employee healthcare benefits, Oct. 20, 2022, McKinsey



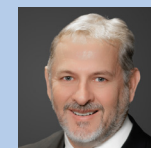
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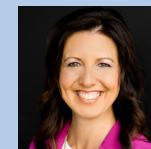
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The Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI) has been the voice of Iowa business since 1903. Its mission is to provide a strong, unified voice to business and industry on issues affecting Iowa employers. ABI is comprised of member companies representing all industries and sizes in Iowa's 99 counties. ABI members employ more than 330,000 Iowans.

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