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## **Democratic Workplaces Movement Blooming in Iowa**

Image



‘I would feel very proud to have Iowa known as the Silicon Valley of democratic companies’

When Traci Fenton met Mark Nolte, president of The Iowa City Area Development (ICAD) Group, for coffee in the fall of 2012 he shared a vision for how the Creative Corridor could become the “Silicon Valley” of democratic workplaces.

Traci is CEO and founder of [WorldBlu](#), a global community of individuals and organizations committed to practicing freedom in the workplace. WorldBlu publishes an annual List of Most Democratic Workplaces.

Traci says she would love to see Mark's vision of the Creative Corridor — home to a half million people in the greater Iowa City/Cedar Rapids metro including Benton, Cedar, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn and Washington counties — becoming a high-density area of democratic companies come to life. Democratically-run companies have a ripple effect on the community, impacting the level of economic prosperity and civic engagement, as noted in University of Michigan Stephen M. Ross School of Business research.

"There's such a dynamism happening right now in the Creative Corridor," Traci says, pointing to Iowa's [Blue Zones Project](#) to become the healthiest state in the nation by 2016.

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"As an Iowan, I would feel very proud to have Iowa known as the Silicon Valley of democratic companies," she adds.

Fusionfarm was the first Iowa-based company to make the WorldBlu List last year. The 2014 WorldBlu List, announced April 8, has four Iowa-based companies among the 41 organizations worldwide to be certified as democratic: Fusionfarm, Geonetric, Hagie Manufacturing and The ICAD Group.

When asked what might attribute to the jump in certified democratic workplaces in Iowa this year, Traci notes she met with several of the companies and also saw positive peer influence between the organizations.

Traci, who currently lives in southern Illinois, returns to her home state of Iowa every couple months and will be moving back to the state in June.

"It's such a community there, with so many incredible people and such a vibrant feel with everything happening in the Creative Corridor. I thought for the first time in my life, I am going to feel like we're missing out if I'm not in Iowa, and I want to be a part of this new Iowa," she says.

Iowa-based Van Meter's executive team will be participating in WorldBlu's new

[Freedom-Centred Leader](#) certification. The two- to three-year professional development program educates people on the new model of leadership, Traci says.

“We’ve developed this incredible curriculum based on almost 20 years of studying what it takes to be a freedom-centred leader in the new model of business, so Van Meter is really leading the charge in saying ‘great, let’s do it,’” Traci says.

Traci has already been asked to present a number of keynote addresses when she returns to Iowa, and she says she looks forward to supporting organizations in the area.

“WorldBlu is a global business, we have members in 80 countries. But I look forward to doing what I can to help with the growth of Creative Corridor,” she says.

*You can comment on this story below, or e-mail [jennifer\(at\)axiomnews.ca](mailto:jennifer(at)axiomnews.ca).*

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