



MWCA Best Practices

SUBMISSION FORM

WIB Name Central Minnesota Workforce Investment Board

Submitted by 
Trish Taylor/Board Chair Date

WSA Name Central Minnesota Jobs & Training Services

Submitted by 
Barbara Chaffee/Chief Executive Officer Date

**Attach a description (no more than two pages) describing the innovative best practice.
Please consider addressing the following points:**

- Overview describing the innovative best practice
- Jobseeker impact (i.e.: benefits, outcomes for jobseekers)
- Community impact (i.e.: benefits, outcomes for non-jobseekers)
- Identification of those involved, including collaborators
- Leveraging/alignment of outside resources
- Ideas for replication/lessons learned

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MWCA Best Practices: Central Minnesota Workforce Investment Board Business Resource Directory

Overview Describing the Innovative Best Practice

Helping business grow in Central Minnesota is a priority for the Central Minnesota Workforce Investment Board. The Business Resource Directory supports business growth by providing important information about business resources available in the following categories: economic development, finance, education, and workforce development at federal, state, regional, and local levels throughout the Central Minnesota Workforce Service Area 5 including McLeod, Meeker, Renville, Kandiyohi, Kanabec, Wright, Sherburne, Mille Lacs, Isanti, Chisago, and Pine Counties.

During the last five years, the Central Minnesota WIB sponsored outreach to business initiatives which included one-on-one interviews with businesses, town hall meetings, industry roundtables, and business conferences. Through these initiatives, the WIB became aware of the need to centralize and disseminate business resource information that could help business locate, grow, and thrive in Central Minnesota.

Compiled under the direction of the WIB Economic Development Ad Hoc Committee, the Directory is designed to help new and existing businesses easily locate the resources to start or grow their business in Central Minnesota. Concerted effort was made to identify the name of a person to contact in each category. For example, names of city clerks, administrators, economic development directors, chambers of commerce directors, and WorkForce Center system staff are listed along with telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. If you are a business looking to access training for your workforce, we've listed contacts in the WorkForce Centers, adult basic education, and post-secondary customized training departments, to name a few. Financing opportunities are listed from federal to state to regional to local sources. Government-sponsored business assistance is catalogued for easy access. This Directory is a culmination of nine months of research sponsored by the Central Minnesota Workforce Investment Board.

Best Practices Impact

The Central Minnesota WIB believes that many business resources go under-utilized due to lack of knowledge that these resources exist. The purpose of this Directory is to help new and existing businesses become aware of these resources and to give them easy contact information. Greater awareness and access will enhance economic stability in the region — a win-win for businesses and job seekers in Central Minnesota.

Four thousand Business Resource Directories were printed. The majority of the Directories are distributed to businesses, economic development entities, chambers of commerce, WorkForce Centers, and county commissioners in the eleven Central Minnesota WSA counties. The Directory is also posted on www.cmjts.org. Business outreach staff in Central Minnesota are continuing to deliver Directories to stakeholders as part of their ongoing business visits and business presentations.

The Directory is a useful and practical tool to strengthen businesses in Central Minnesota and supports the Central Minnesota Workforce Investment Board's mission: To provide leadership that integrates workforce, education, and economic resources for our communities.

Collaborators/Alignment of Outside Resources

Partners in this project (and their in-kind donation) are:

- Central Minnesota WorkForce Investment Board
Economic Development Ad Hoc Committee, with membership from private business and economic development. This committee met nine times for approximately 90 minutes each to provide input on the Directory design and contents.
- Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services
Approximately 400 hours of staff research and committee meeting time
Approximately 120 hours of staff time to obtain print quotes, create a comparison grid for board review, layout and design of the publication, and preparation of files for print.
Office equipment and copying expenses associated with monthly directory drafts
- The Initiative Foundation
This project was funded in part by the Initiative Foundation, a regional foundation.
- WorkForce Center System Business Staff
Assistance in business directory delivery

Replication/Lessons Learned

The WIB will update the Directory on a regular basis, defined as every two years. The first printing of the Directory is free to businesses and city, county, and regional entities who serve businesses. As the demand for additional Directories grows, a \$5 donation will be requested to cover additional printing costs. The Directory is also available on the Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services website www.cmjts.org. As the website is updated, the goal is to have links to business websites and to sustain the Directory through web-site sponsorships. Anecdotally, comments from those who have seen and/or received the Directory are very positive, noting the ease of use, the comprehensive and detailed information, and the attractive print format of the Directory. Many have commented that having the Directory in printed form makes it an easy-to-use reference tool they will keep on their desk. To date, we believe it is best to have the Directory in both print and electronic formats. In order to do so, we will need to secure funding for the second printing through web-site sponsorship, pre-purchase of the Directory, or through secured grant funding. The WIB has also learned that the Directory is also an effective tool in promoting Central Minnesota in general as well as in educating the public about the role of the Workforce Investment Board.