



MWCA Best Practices

SUBMISSION FORM

WIB Name/WSA Central Minnesota Workforce Investment Board

Submitted by Barb Chaffee

**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 or employer impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for jobseekers)
- Community impact (ie: 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 Virtual Job Fair

Overview Describing the Innovative Best Practice

“Bricks and Mortar” Job Fairs have long been a staple of workforce development. They allow employers to search for applicants, promote themselves to other businesses and deepen their community “footprint.” The Central Minnesota Workforce Investment Board has been an active supporter of this opportunity for job seekers, employers, and community members to meet and engage each other for many years throughout WSA 5.

However, traditional job fairs have some drawbacks in the fast-paced business climate of the 21st century. Lean business practices allow for limited staff time for a site-based job fair. And, in an increasingly regional economy, the reach of one job fair location is limited. For job seekers, a job fair could easily occur during hours that they are unavailable for any number of reasons, including commute times, job commitments, family commitments, etc.,

To help address these drawbacks and to allow more employers and job seekers access to a job fair, the Central Minnesota WIB offered businesses the opportunity to participate in a Virtual Job Fair. This time-limited, web-based job fair allowed businesses an opportunity to get the benefits of a well-promoted job fair without having to dedicate hours of staff time to a physical location. The Virtual Job Fair was open for a week, 24 hours a day. Job seekers and employers alike could access it at any time.

The Virtual Job Fair is a product that gives the central Minnesota area a job fair that breaks down the large distances involved in WSA 5, and the opportunity to attract “tech-savvy” workers to the region.

Best Practices Impact

The Virtual Job Fair is an excellent way for WSA 5 employers to connect with job seekers who are not the area’s typical job fair participants. WSA 5 exports a large amount of skilled labor to other regions. Employers need a way to entice those workers to stay in this region, but have difficulty reaching them. These workers have long commute times that do not allow for time to attend events. By participating in the Virtual Job Fair, employers access a means to promote their business, and collect resumes from a large pool of candidates, who can find time to browse the internet at home at anytime, but are unable to dedicate time to an outside event.

The first Central Minnesota Virtual Job Fair collected resumes from 688 participants. Businesses received an average of 352 visits to their booths during the fair, and a total of 140 resumes were submitted for posted jobs. Additionally, businesses will have the ability to gather all of the resumes that job seekers designated as public for positions that have subsequently become available.

The surveys collected from participants indicated that the largest number of job seekers learned of the Virtual Job Fair from articles and advertisement in local newspapers. Employers agreed that the Virtual Job Fair is an excellent way to participate in a job fair without the strain of staffing a display.

Collaborators

Partners in this project are:

- **Central Minnesota Workforce Investment Board**
 - The Central Minnesota WIB purchased the Virtual Job Fair product, and provided the vision for the concept of a Virtual Job Fair.
- **Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services**
 - Provided sales and marketing time for the Virtual Job Fair for both employers and job seekers.
 - Provided technical assistance and planning for the Virtual Job Fair.
 - Generated marketing materials for the Virtual Job Fair.
- **Minnesota DEED**
 - Supported the Virtual Job Fair with contact information for area businesses from the MinnesotaWorks.net database.
- **The Wright County Journal Press**
 - Participated as a sponsor and provided both print advertisement and an online link to the Virtual Job Fair.
- **I-94 West Chamber of Commerce**
 - Participated as a sponsor by promoting the Virtual Job Fair to its membership.
- **KRWC Radio**
 - Participated as a sponsor by promoting the Virtual Job Fair over-the-air and online.
- **The Wright County Economic Development Partnership**
 - Participated as a sponsor by promoting the Virtual Job Fair to businesses in its service area.

Replication/Lessons Learned

The Virtual Job Fair concept can seem in many ways to duplicate the service provided by both MinnesotaWorks.net and other online job databases. However, the initial launch showed that having an online, time-limited event will draw a large number of job seekers much like a regular job fair without competing for job seekers. Additionally, the Virtual Job Fair can seem like a high-risk investment for employers. However, considering the large number of hits the website received the return on investment will become easier to show potential exhibitors.

The Virtual Job Fair product is available for purchase from the Employment and Training provider in Brevard County Florida, Brevard Job Link (www.brevardjoblink.org). Questions regarding the rollout and implementation of Central Minnesota's Virtual Job Fair can be directed to vjfsupport@cmjts.org.