



## MWCA Best Practices

### SUBMISSION FORM

WIB Name/WSA Central Minnesota Workforce Investment Board/WSA 5

Submitted by Barbara Chaffee, CEO, Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services

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

- 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

Information can be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to:

Anne Olson

Director, MWCA

125 Charles Avenue

Saint Paul, Minnesota 55103

Fax: (651) 224-6540

E-mail: [aolson@mncounties.org](mailto:aolson@mncounties.org)

***DUE DATE: FRIDAY, JULY 24, 2009***

## **Job Seeker Packets**

**Submitted by Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services – July 24, 2009**

### **Overview describing the innovative best practice:**

In fall 2008, the WorkForce Centers and CMJTS offices in Workforce Service Area 5 (WSA 5), began to feel the effects of a declining economy in the form of a “tsunami” of recently unemployed persons pleading for job search help immediately! The sheer numbers of job seekers, many dislocated from Hutchinson Technology in Hutchinson, Crystal Cabinets in Princeton, and car dealerships in Monticello, demanded our attention and forced us to think “outside the box” in how to respond quickly to their need for information, resources, and answers to general job seeker questions.

The Central Minnesota Workforce Investment Board (WIB), CMJTS Leadership Team, and WSA 5 WorkForce Center partners decided to put together a “packet” of must-know information about regional job seeker resources, programs, and services. This information was customized according to regional resources and packaged in a reusable vinyl job-search folder, which included other helpful job search organizational materials. Whoever came into our WorkForce Centers or associate sites, walked out with self-service materials and information to start career planning and job search activities. Packets were also available in Spanish and all continue to be distributed throughout our regional offices. CMJTS staff also found these packets appropriate to use during dislocated worker outreach and orientation sessions.

### **Job seeker impact:**

The most effective job search is the job search that starts immediately, if not before, a lay-off. Unfortunately, many of our currently unemployed were taken completely by surprise, as in the case of laid-off auto dealer workers. CMJTS felt strongly that we needed to address the needs of workers, from large or small lay-offs, in a new way. Information is power! Job seekers were given the basic information they needed to start an effective job search as soon as they entered our office or at dislocated worker orientations. They walked out with a resume template, interviewing tips, education information, job search websites, county resource guides, and employment and training program information. It is difficult to measure in statistics the effect these packets had on a person’s job search. However, we are able to record anecdotally that those who handed out the packets received many “thanks” and other expressions of appreciation. In “normal” times, CMJTS is able to serve our job seekers requests for services in a very timely manner. These are not normal times. The packets helped job seekers advance their re-employment plan; while, at the same time, CMJTS increased the number of trained staff to be able to, once again, provide our normal level of services. “The face of the individuals seeking our help is different this time,” said Barb Chaffee, CEO of CMJTS. “Many are baby-boomers who have lost their long-time jobs and have not had to write a resume or look for a job since they were in their 20s.”

### **Community impact:**

WSA 5 communities have been significantly impacted by the recession. Over 60,000 people came through our doors last year. By April of 2009, that number had almost doubled. According to Cameron Macht, DEED Labor Market Analyst, “The number of people filing unemployment insurance claims has climbed rapidly over the last two years. In calendar year 2006, there were 40,961 claims filed in the Central Minnesota region. In 2008, 50,350 claims were filed – a 23 percent increase. That was nearly twice as fast as the increase in UI claims filed statewide, which rose 12.3 percent from 2006 to 2008. Unemployment insurance activity in the Central Minnesota region soared upward 63.3 percent in the first quarter of 2009, changing from 11,488 claims filed in the first three months of 2008 to 18,765 claims filed from January to March of 2009. The fastest increases were in manufacturing, management of companies and enterprises, and information; while the largest numbers of UI claims in the region were filed in manufacturing and construction.”

Parking lots were full by 8:00 am, there was standing room only, and lines for the computers in a number of our offices. Central Minnesota has long been the fastest growing region of the state, growing twice as fast as the state as a whole over the last 50 years. However, the region’s fast growth has slowed in the last couple of years and too many of our residents have faced home foreclosures and job losses. As of June 2009, nine of our 11

counties have unemployment rates of 9 percent to 12.2 percent. Packets continue to be distributed to help lessen the impact of this economic downturn and to start people back on the road to recovery.

**Identification of those involved, including collaborators:**

The Central Minnesota WIB met in December 2008 and suggested the development of the client packets. On January 27, 2009, the WorkForce Center (WFC) Management Team (consisting of all WFC partners in WSA 5) gathered for a partner retreat and reviewed and approved the implementation of the universal job seeker information packets in WFCs and associate site throughout WSA 5's 11-county region. CMJTS took the lead in coordinating the packets. Volunteers also helped assemble the information by region into 7,000 packets. CMJTS staff and WFC partners helped distribute packets. Resource directories with community-based resources, including Adult Basic Education schedules, compiled by various programs or community partners were included.

**Leveraging/alignment of outside resources:**

Discretionary funds from CMJTS paid the direct expense of the packets. CMJTS was responsible for assembling and distributing to offices. WorkForce Center partners assisted in distribution to job seekers.

**Ability for use or replication by others:**

There is no secret to replication of this "Best Practices." We believe this "best practice" made a huge impact on those who received the packet. The following is a list of materials we included. Your region may have additional "must-know-about" resources.

- "How Can We Help You" request checklist
- Local ABE class schedules and contact information
- Job Seeker Resource Directory by county
- Basic resume template
- Program brochures (Dislocated Worker Program, Build Your Work Future, Youth Program)
- How to Apply for Unemployment Insurance brochure
- Resource Room brochure (DEED)
- Pocket Book of Job Search Date & Tips (Jist Works)
- Hot Jobs in Central Minnesota
- Internet sites for job seekers
- Mini purse-size notebook with pen
- CMJTS pen
- WorkForce Center partner brochures
- MnSCU information by Region 7E, 7W, and 6E