

## MWCA Best Practices

### SUBMISSION FORM

WIB Name/WSA Dakota-Scott Workforce Services, WSA 14

Submitted by Mark Jacobs

**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 (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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## Entrepreneur

### Overview describing the innovative best practice

“To support entrepreneurs in growing their businesses and to become successful by fostering integration of services to assist and grow business in Dakota and Scott Counties.” That is the purpose statement for the Dakota-Scott Workforce Investment Board’s (WIB) Business Services committee’s entrepreneurs’ initiative.

The committee developed a two year work plan. The following activities have been accomplished:

### **Creation and dissemination of two brochures including:**

- So, You Want To Start A Business? - Your "How To Guide" – this brochure includes: 10 steps to starting your business; internet business information; and business resources specific to the “South of the River” area.
- Entrepreneur Resources - South of the River - this brochure includes: information on general entrepreneurial resources; minority assistance; training; healthcare resources; financial services; networking, and; internet business information.

### **Activities/events including:**

- Promoting and partnering in the offering of “*Taking the Plunge Workshop*” developed as a 3-hour overview to help answer the question, “Is the life of the entrepreneur for you?” In the class, attendees learn what an entrepreneur is and if they had what it takes to start their own business. Seminar is \$10, and presented Bob Voss, Dakota County Technical College (DCTC) and an expert in working with and advising entrepreneurs. The classes will be held monthly through the end of 2009.
- *Entrepreneur Expo* – Held in conjunction with the six local Chambers’ of Commerce county-wide Business After Hours event this workshop featured Pamela Muldoon presenting her “Grow Your Network - Grow Your Business” information followed-up by a panel of entrepreneurs talking about their experiences. They also answered these questions:
  - What were the three smartest things I did when starting my business?
  - What were the three dumbest things I did when starting my business?
  - What was the biggest stumbling block to get into business?
  - Who do you need on your team to be successful (resources)?

Afterwards, the 20 attendees practiced their networking skills at the Chamber’s expo and visited with exhibitors.

- *Creating and Hosting a Create Your Own Job Event* - Twenty-one people attended the event held in April. The participants learned about “Creating Their Own Job” from Bob Voss an instructor at DCTC. Bob held a very spirited information session with lots of participation from his audience for three hours. Next, participants heard from a panel of successful entrepreneurs. The panel included Patrick Boulay with New Business Minnesota, Dennis Stauffer with Insight Fusion, and Christine Pigsley with Dakota County Technical College. The panel was moderated by Jim Cormican with Twin Cities Entrepreneurs. Following this the participants talked with panelists individually, network with the other participants, and gathered literature from the Dakota County Library, JJ Hill Library, DCTC, St Mary’s College and the brochures on Starting a Business and Entrepreneur resources.
- Presented *First Annual Entrepreneur of the Year Award* at the WIB’s year-end banquet. The recipient was Bob Klas Sr. of Tapemark. Intent of creating the award was to recognize area’s leading entrepreneurs and also to generate overall interest and publicity for entrepreneurship.
- *Exhibited at Minnesota Indian Business Conference* as well as the *Get Jobs, Job Fair*. Provided the local resources along with “A Guide to Starting a Business in Minnesota” which was an extremely popular give-away.

**Jobseeker impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for jobseekers)**

Through the large lay-offs of previous years including those of Control Data and Northwest Airlines, we know that many of the affected employees consider starting their own businesses so they can “control their own destiny.” The committee’s goal was to provide information and resources so people considering that option would have help navigating that path – whether they were looking to start up or purchase a business or become a consultant.

One of the realizations was that there were many resources available locally, state-wide and nationally, so nothing new needed to be created relative to information. However, there was an identified but unmet need to gather the resources into one publication and even a larger need for activities. We’ve also seen considerable interest for the various activities/workshops. People really enjoy hearing from those who’ve gone through the start-up phase, and hearing (and hopefully learning from) what worked well, and didn’t, for these entrepreneurs.

In the development of the activities, the WIB also ensured that the overall plan was complementary to efforts such as Gate 2 for older workers and information available through DEED.

**Community impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for non-jobseekers)**

- We’ve found that many of the events are attended by people who have already started businesses, but are looking forward to the networking opportunities or to learn about new resources.
- Visibility for entrepreneurship and the WIB – serving as a convener of materials and the developer of events improves the visibility of the WIB and WorkForce Centers
- Employers – The sort of information and activities the WIB developed and provided appeals to the business community and is well-publicized by the local Chambers of Commerce. They’ve also been great partners in hosting events and/or promoting activities.
- Successful business start-ups – it’s too early to know what impact has been made yet; but it would be the ultimate goal.

**Identification of those involved, including collaborators**

Dakota-Scott Workforce Investment Board, Workforce Center partners, Twin Cities Entrepreneurs, Dakota County Technical College, six Dakota-county area Chambers of Commerce, local entrepreneurs, Dakota Future, and Small Business Development Center

**Leveraging/alignment of outside resources –**

The most valuable outside resource has been local entrepreneurs who share their time in the workshops and panel discussions. Their candor and humbleness is refreshing and valuable. The WIB uses an outside consultant to coordinate the activities. She reports to the committee each month with updates and for input and direction. The efforts have also benefitted tremendously from the expertise from the Small Business Development Center staff and Chambers of Commerce. Additionally, Dakota County Technical College provided space for workshops at its Apple Valley site.

**Ideas for replication/lessons learned:**

The consultant is low-cost but extremely familiar with the area. She handles all of the coordination or resources and activities. These efforts are a lot of work and having her was instrumental to getting something done. A sub-committee of the business services committee works closely with her to develop the plan and then the additional details on specific activities. What has been done is quite replicable.