

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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Connecting the Dots – Sharing WIB Resources with the Community

Overview describing the innovative best practice

At the direction and leadership of the Dakota-Scott Workforce Investment Board (WIB), there has been a concerted effort to broaden the communications within the two-county community. This is being done, in part, with emails to targeted groups notifying them about WIB activities but more importantly including information of value to the organizations and their networks. The groups include:

- *Legislators (federal, state, local)* – staff sends monthly “highlight” emails to legislators which includes the staff for federal legislators; the entire Dakota-Scott state legislative delegation; and various local Mayors and City Council members. Content includes: information of interest to constituents (for example workshops, special events and/or services for job seekers); recent WIB activities and accomplishments; program outcomes; and/or community involvement.
- *Community Development directors/Chamber of Commerce leadership* – periodically, information is sent to these organizations that interact regularly with employers in the Dakota-Scott area. The content provided is more focused on information of interest to employers, such as the incumbent worker grant funding, or events such as the recent “Funds for Small Business” workshop.
- *Community non-profits; post-secondary schools; and faith-based organizations* – this is a more recent communications phenomena which was developed to better connect the various organizations who are working closely with job seekers. We know that many individuals who’ve lost their jobs don’t know what do to after they file for unemployment. Thus, the goal in connecting with these groups was to “connect the dots” amongst those providing services so we can all better help those seeking employment. On a weekly basis, we forward the job lead and event information generated by WorkForce Center staff to the external organizations.

A list that started modestly with Dakota County's four primary non-profits and two post-secondary schools has expanded so the distribution is sent directly to more than 100 organizations. Additionally, information sent to one Dakota county church is in turn forwarded to 90+ others. The contacts with faith-based and non-profits expanded tremendously thanks to a comprehensive contact list provided by Scott County.

Jobseeker impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for jobseekers)

Job seekers benefit in that they can learn about WorkForce Center resources though this expanded outreach effort. Here are examples:

- Some legislators take information from the highlights and in turn list them in their electronic updates to constituents.
- Kurt Bills, a Rosemount high school teacher and Rosemount city council member notes, “I forward the information in the monthly updates to the counselors who are in contact with so many of our families. They have mentioned that they appreciate and use the information when dealing with families. I also pass the information along to students. This year there were multiple students looking for jobs as they try to build up money for college.”
- The information sent to the community development directors and chambers can impact job seekers in many ways. For example, Eagan’s community development director had staff to put WorkForce Center resource links on the city site. Chambers often publish the information in their newsletters and/or weekly electronic updates.
- Perhaps, the greatest bang for the buck for job seekers is our communications with the non-profits, schools and faith-based organizations. This extensive network enables us to

leverage the great work of WorkForce Center staff throughout the two counties. On a weekly basis, we send the contact list the job leads generated in the area as well as the networking group updates which include job openings, information on upcoming events, and area resources.

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

- Awareness – this comprehensive effort provides increased awareness of the WIB, employment programs, workforce-related information and WorkForce Center activities to a broad range of individuals and organizations but in a targeted manner.
- Visibility – informing the groups improves the visibility of the WIB, Workforce Center activities and resources, as well as employment-related information.
- Knowledge – Knowledge is power. For all three identified groups, the information increases their knowledge of issues, resources and activities.
- Employers – The Chambers of Commerce will often put the relevant “value-add” information in their electronic updates to members. Providing them with the information also keeps them informed of overall trends.
- Collaboration – “we’re all in this together” to provide services for job seekers. The additional contact with organizations throughout the area will ideally lead to working together on other efforts.
- Finally, State Representative Rick Hansen notes: “The Dakota-Scott Workforce Investment Board does a great job providing valuable info to legislators and the community at large. I pass their information along to constituents through my e-updates. Folks like the data, the outreach and info on how to help in this economy.”

Identification of those involved, including collaborators

WorkForce Center staff are the prime generators of content. Some of the information is sent directly to the contact lists. In other cases, WIB staff collects, edits, formats, organizes, and then sends the information based on the target audience.

The real collaborative value however is the utilization and dissemination of information by the groups. Some of the comments we’ve received include: “This is awesome – thanks for sharing it!” “Thank you for sending these to us, we are sending them on and posting them. It is great.” “Excellent, I’ve forwarded this on. Thanks!”

Leveraging/alignment of outside resources –

Primary outside resources are the organizations that in turn forward the information to others whether they’re constituents, residents, clients and/or members of faith-based organizations. Other external resources which are leveraged are the employers who provide information about their job openings. Soon we’ll have a “bankers list” as they’re a group that a) meets with employers and thus could benefit from the type of info we send to the Chambers of Commerce and b) but also deal with folks who’ve lost their jobs.

Ideas for replication/lessons learned:

Replicating this sort of communications would be relatively easy. Key points are: a) identify who you want to communicate with; b) assemble the appropriate list; and c) send information in an easy-to-read format with value-added content. We found it’s best to repackage the content from group to group as people get too many emails – thus we want the information to be relevant and easy-to-read for the target list.