



MWCA Best Practices

SUBMISSION FORM

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

Submitted by Helene Woods

**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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DUE DATE: FRIDAY, JULY 24, 2009

Career Success Essentials –

Overview describing the innovative best practice – 25 Points

Dakota-Scott Workforce Services has presented a quarterly seminar for job seekers entitled *Career Success Essentials (CSE)* for the past two years. CSE was designed to help job seekers in need of assistance with the basics of the job search – the resume, networking and interviewing. The seminar was tested for three initial quarters in program year 2007. Staff found that demand was so high, and feedback from evaluations was so positive, that the project was repeated again in this program year 2008. In fact, due to high demand, an additional date was added to this year's schedule. Each event features:

- **Resume Rescue** - CSE begins with a resume class in the morning. During class, clients learn the basic do's and don'ts of resume writing. They also learn what type of resume would be best for their individual work and education histories. Employment Counselors are also on hand to review resumes of attendees who brought theirs along. Counselors review the resumes, note comments while the participants attend the rest of the day, and return them to attendees during breaks.
- **Networking Redefined** - Next, SagePresence, a local company, provides a workshop on networking. The company is a collaborative of three speakers, including a communications expert, screenplay writer and movie director. Additionally, the speakers excel at presenting information in an informative yet enjoyable manner. Their unique approach to networking allows participants to view the effort in a new, less stressful, light. Participants learn how to approach networking as a means of appreciating and helping others. The job seeker's anxiety is dissolved by changing their purpose from being all about them to meeting the needs of possible network members. In addition, the job seeker and potential network member make a stronger, more memorable connection. One client reported to the networking job club that he tried the approach, and made three times as many contacts as he had in the past. He was employed within a few weeks, and his network was still growing.
- **Hiring Panel** - During lunch participants hear from a panel of hiring professionals from that geographic area. For example, if CSE is held in Scott County, the majority of the panelists are from Scott County businesses. Strong attempts are made to get panelists from companies currently hiring. A diverse group is sought as well, allowing perspectives from for-profit, public and non-profit businesses, as well as large and small employers. Panelists give a brief description of their role and company, and then the floor is opened up to questions from participants. Questions often focus on what employers want to see in resumes and cover letters, what are the biggest reasons people are not given interviews, what makes an interview successful and much more. Participants learn the differences between public hiring processes and those of smaller for-profit agencies; what they can do to give themselves an edge in the hiring process; and also that many factors, most of which are unknown to the candidate, go into making the hiring decision.
- **Advanced Interviewing** - The final workshop is also provided by SagePresence and builds upon the lessons learned in *Networking Redefined*. The class helps participants learn to position themselves in the interview to be less of a receiver and more proactive in communicating their strengths to the potential employer. They also learn how to develop a mission or message that resonates with employers.

Jobseeker impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for jobseekers) – 25 Points

Job seekers gain advanced skills on the basics of the job search, including the resume, networking and interviewing. Feedback from evaluations of CSE has indicated that participants enjoy attending the full day of activities. More importantly, they find those activities are valuable and meaningful for

their job search as they learn new approaches and techniques that can be immediately implemented. The new techniques are purposely designed to be upbeat and positive, to help remove the anger and depression many job seekers are going through that can hinder the job seeking process. The new skills do not supplant traditional job seeking approaches, but can be added to enhance what they were already doing. This makes it non-threatening, while the excitement of trying something new and different motivates the client to move forward. Many employment counselors refer their clients who have been job searching for long periods of time to attend CSE for the purpose of remotivating them with new approaches to the tediousness of job seeking. Finally, the interaction between hiring professionals and participants often opens up job seekers' perspectives on transferable skills. Many people leave realizing they had skills that are applicable to other industries thus motivating them to try new approaches for their job search.

Community impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for non-jobseekers) – 20 Points

The direct interaction between hiring professionals and job seekers has proven to have some strong community development impacts. Hiring professionals come face to face with hundreds of job seekers and cannot help but realize the impact their job has on so many individuals. It has been our experience that companies are eager to assist in workforce development but do not know how to begin.

CSE provides an opening for hiring professionals to volunteer an hour or so of time, become comfortable working with Workforce Services Area (WSA) staff, and further relationships are developed from there. Many continue on to apply for Incumbent Worker grants, sit on advisory committees, serve on other panels, volunteer for Business of the Day or other events and even attend WIB meetings. The hiring professionals' direct involvement also raises their company's visibility and stature within the overall and job seeking community.

Identification of those involved, including collaborators – 15 Points

Dakota-Scott Workforce Services is a collection of partners that make up our WSA. Staff members from the Burnsville, West St. Paul and Shakopee WorkForce Centers collaborate to present CSE. Employment Counselors from DEED Job Service, HIRED, Dakota County Workforce Services and Scott County Employment and Training volunteer to review resumes and field questions during the hiring panel. In addition, local businesses send staff members to volunteer their time to participate on the hiring panel. While the majority of attendees are universal customers and enrolled dislocated worker clients, the event has also gleaned referrals from MFIP and DWP employment counselors, Rehabilitation Services, Veterans' Services, Youth programs, Social Services and Child Support.

Leveraging/alignment of outside resources – 10 Points

Space from county departments has been donated, including the law enforcement center of Scott County and Dakota County conference rooms, to defray costs. Participants receive packets of information that often includes upcoming event and resource information from area nonprofits. Services such as foreclosure assistance, financial resources, grief and loss events and more are included as many participants are universal customers not receiving ongoing resources and referrals from an employment counselor.

Ideas for replication/lessons learned – 5 Points

CSE is easy to replicate once a format that fits the WSA is developed. It is important to get evaluations from as many participants as possible and review them immediately after each event so the presenters and program designers can continue quality improvement efforts with each event date. Listening to the attendees and taking their advice has been the basis of CSE's on-going success as the program has evolved based on that feedback.