



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

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

DUE DATE: FRIDAY, JULY 24, 2009

Best Practice: Job Club Career Day

Overview describing the innovative best practice – 25 Points

Job Club Career Day started July 2008 as a means to bring more career exploration opportunities to universal customers and enrolled program participants. Job Club Career Day is similar to that day in high school when parents would come and talk about their job. In this case, however, the audience is the Workforce Center networking club and the presenters are area employees. Volunteers are recruited from a wide range of high-demand occupations to speak about their job, why it is a good fit for them and how they got the job. This provides an opportunity for job seekers to hear from employees directly about the types of skills that are needed for a variety of positions, and it allows the job seeker to determine if this is a career they may enjoy and whether their skills are transferable to the profession. Job seekers who are not interested in the type of position presented still benefit as they learn how that person obtained their job, what the hiring process was, what interview questions were asked and more.

Since July 2008, 11 people have volunteered to speak to the networking club, which is free and open to the public. Industries represented include the airlines, manufacturing, media, law enforcement, human resources, public health, community development, social work, and road and rail transportation. Positions have included web application developers, machinists, magazine writers, sales, police officers, recruiters, hazardous waste investigators, health educators, community development directors, financial workers and transportation instructors.

In July 2008, the number of attendees was 17. As of June 2009, the number of attendees has risen to 65. Attendance numbers started rising within 3 months of implementing Job Club Career Day. This is due in part to word of mouth and popularity of Career Day itself, but also due to higher traffic in the WorkForce Centers because of the economic downturn. Flyers and posters are available in the Workforce Centers to advertise upcoming speakers for Job Club Career Day. Feedback from attendees indicates that many came to the networking club for the first time because they wanted to learn about a certain job. After attending, they stayed for the rest of job club, and became regular attendees.

Presenters at Job Club Career Day spend a few minutes talking about what they do, where they work, why the job is a good fit and how they got that particular job. From there, attendees ask questions directly of the presenter. Many opportunities for clients have come from these interactions. A machinist from Permac Industries invited those interested to tour the facility after many in attendance realized they already had the transferable skills to be machinists. After touring, several did apply for positions at Permac. Another speaker, working as both a magazine and free-lance writer, assisted an attendee in learning the free-lance submission process, helping the client raise her income. Another client was preparing for a series of interviews with the Burnsville Police Department. That day's speaker volunteered to coach the client on her interview answers. Another participant was hired by a recruiter through a Dakota-Scott subsidized work experience program.

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

You don't know what you don't know. Knowledge is power. These two adages are the reality for job seekers and the basis for the value of this event for job seekers. It provides the wonderful opportunity to have an actual employee from an area employer talk with job seekers. That conversation includes the realities of their job, the skill sets needed, their employer's culture, and the short-term and long-term outlooks. All of these factors combine so the event is a significant "value-add" for attendees.

More specifically, job seekers gain knowledge of career exploration options, transferrable skills, job seeking strategies and differing work environments. Job seekers gain a broader perspective on their potential futures, and can envision themselves in a variety of careers they may not have previously

considered. We've even found that many job seekers have benefited from the connections made with the speakers themselves, as can be seen from the example outlined in the first section. Several job seekers received interview assistance, self employment assistance that resulted in increased income and even full-time employment. This also reinforces the philosophy of networking itself – showing tangible impacts of making professional connections with people for all the job club attendees to see.

In addition, through the questions to presenters job seekers become more knowledgeable about the skill set needs so they can then in turn potentially pursue training to become more employable in that field.

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

The community members who volunteer their time to present usually have no previous experience with the WorkForce Center and its services. The presenters return to their own places of business and relay the positive experience they had working with the staff and meeting the clients. Businesses have allowed tours from job seekers and hired interested job seeker through contacts made from Job Club Career Day. As a result, these area employers are added to our “network” of active employers partnering with the Workforce Center to find the right employees. Businesses become Businesses of the Day, apply for Incumbent Worker Grants, partner with Business Services Representatives to hire more participants and much more.

Career Day has also acted as a means for further training and knowledge for Employment Counselors. Many counselors attend to learn about the skills and personality preferences needed for different positions, allowing them to better provide guidance and counseling as they work with clients. Additionally, counselors learn more about area companies thus enabling them to be even more connected when working with job seekers.

Identification of those involved, including collaborators – 15 Points

Collaborators include the following employers: Northwest Airlines, Permac Industries, Metropolitan Media Group, Meridian Display, Burnsville Police Department, Express Employment Professionals, MDH Division of Environmental Health, City of Burnsville, Dakota County and Dakota County Technical College. New businesses and volunteers are recruited regularly. Staff who coordinate the event include members of Dakota County Workforce Services and the Business Services Representatives of the Dakota-Scott Workforce Service Area. In addition, the Business Services Committee of the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) helps to recruit new volunteers and employers interested in participating. We've also found that WIB membership has a two-fold advantage – WIB members are a great source of panelists and it's a great way to leverage WIB members' energy and the desire to help do something positive for the community.

Leveraging/alignment of outside resources – 10 Points

Collaborations are the key, but tough-to-quantify leverage of outside resources. This is in keeping with the WIB's role of facilitator and organization that helps “connect the dots” within the community. It's also bringing together hiring professionals from area employers – and their expertise - to talk with citizens of the area who are job seeking. Thus, we're leveraging connections, goodwill of the folks who volunteer to speak, and community relationships. The good news is that leveraged funds have not been necessary because this is a volunteer activity,

Ideas for replication/lessons learned – 5 Points

This is a very easy program to duplicate. One dedicated person who can recruit presenters can make a great impact. Career Day is a monthly event that takes place during one hour of the regular weekly networking club (which is two hours long). Thus an audience is already available and it can act as a catalyst to increase networking club attendance.