

- **Overview describing the innovative best practice**

Due to the merger of Delta and Northwest Airlines, an estimated 1,100 individuals at the former NWA headquarters have lost or will lose their jobs. A project of this magnitude relies on an effective network of providers as well as timely and consistent communications with the individuals who lost their jobs.

By assembling a consortium of provider throughout the Twin Cities metro area, working closely with the Employment Management Committee, leveraging the collective expertise of both groups, creating innovative programming and setting a new standard for communications with laid-off employees, the Premerger Northwest Airlines (NWA) project is an effective best practice.

The Dakota-Scott Workforce Service area is the administrative lead for the consortium which includes Anoka County, Washington County, Employment Action Center, HIRED, Scott County and DEED/JOB Service as service providers. Thanks to this consortium, dislocated worker services for laid-off NWA workers are available close to their homes – there’s no need to travel from Forest Lake to Burnsville to receive services. The consortium is more than a service delivery model though – the partners meet monthly. Initially, it was to ensure everyone was on the same page regarding eligibility, enrollments, training policies, etc. Now, it’s to talk about challenges the job seekers are facing and developing appropriate programming.

The Employee Management Committee (EMC) – think of it as a steering committee of individuals laid off from the company - who selected the Dakota-Scott consortium as the provider - also plays a key role. Initially, the group met weekly to make sure the project got off to a good start. Now the meetings are monthly. Each meeting includes a review of the past time period and what’s gone well and where there have been challenges. Additionally, the EMC has the connections to know where laid-off employees may be having issues as well as the anticipated timing of future lay-offs. A few specific examples of the impact of this group include:

- a) mini-MBA classes - While they liked the mini-MBAs offered by St. Thomas, the cost of approximately \$3,000 per person was of concern as it would use most of their individual training budgets. Staff talked with St. Thomas and found that by reserving and filling a class for 30 people, the per person cost was approximately, \$1,100 per person.
- b) grief classes - through the EMC, we learned about significant emotional challenges some were dealing with due to the lay-off. A series of weekly classes were started that enabled individuals to talk with a psychologists about their struggles.
- c) a guide for buying computer equipment – since many of the people being laid off didn’t have a home computer - one of the EMC members had fielded a lot of questions about what people should buy. This EMC member wrote a comprehensive article that was posted on the website developed especially for this project with information on what one would need if they were buying a laptop, desktop, monitor, mouse, etc.

Innovative workshops/training – other specific workshops for the NWA project include:

- a) Mini Health Care Job Fair - focused on companies in the medical/health care field with openings for people without health care backgrounds, addressing NWA clients transferrable skills.
- b) Improving Your Oral Communication – a three day class that helps clients learn to improve their communication not just for networking and interviewing, but for career development as well, conducted by a screen writer and movie producer.

- c) CareerX – a career exploration workshop that helps clients match their skills and interests to a career field, and then takes them through the next step of learning how to research those specific fields using Labor Market Information.
- d) Support in Transition – a support and educational group to help clients deal with the grief and stress of job loss while maintaining their motivation to move ahead.

Communications: One of the important components of the project has been communicating with individuals who've lost their jobs. The company has worked wonderfully well with DEED's rapid response team to hold orientations and provide information. The Dakota-Scott staff created an email contact list – which now numbers over 800 people – to send a weekly, two-page, electronic newsletter. This newsletter provides information about eligibility, upcoming training classes, registration information and more. Finally, we've used SurveyMonkey to: get feedback on the desired mini MBA classes; and to get insights from counselors in the field. Within the next week, staff will be distributing an electronic survey to the entire distribution list of 800+ individuals to get their feedback on how the program is working for them and to get their recommendations for additional/different services and or workshops/events.

Staff also created a NWA-specific web-site which features an array of information including job openings, upcoming workshops, contact information for the EMC, WorkForce Center locations and more.

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

- Our measure of success for job seekers in this project thus far include:
  - even though the project is in the early stage - 19 people have become employed with an average wage of \$27.11/hr – far above the target wage of \$18/hr.
  - the positive feedback from the Employee Management Committee – especially regarding the specialized workshops created and implemented for the group.
  - the positive feedback on all of the workshop customer satisfaction result surveys

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

The benefits for the community are a bit less direct. Ultimately, having the individuals who were laid-off become re-employed is good not only for their families, but their communities. The new workshops we've added will help our overall programs throughout the years. After 9/11, Hennepin County WSA administered a magnificent model for a dislocated worker services which involved providers throughout the state. Much like that example, we're demonstrating the ability for our WorkForce Center system – and in this case the metro area – to work effectively together to provide streamlined services to job seekers.

#### **Identification of those involved, including collaborators – Key collaborators include:**

- Employee Management Committee
- Dakota-Scott Workforce Services
- The consortium which includes: Anoka County, Washington County, Employment Action Center, HIREd, Scott County and DEED/JOB Service

#### **Leveraging/alignment of outside resources:**

This project leverages:

- Knowledge and expertise of the EMC. This group takes their responsibilities seriously to best represent their colleagues who were laid off due to the merger of the airlines.
- Knowledge and expertise of six different training providers and their staff.
- Expertise of contracted providers such as Sage Presence that provide high-quality, value-add workshops to help people prepare for interviews.

- Knowledge and expertise of training providers.
- Knowledge and expertise of Dakota Scott Workforce Investment Board. One example is when the DEED Commissioner asked about the employers' perception of the St. Thomas mini-MBA training. They provided feedback about their real-world perspective on the training's value.

**Ideas for replication/lessons learned –**

Components of this program are very replicable while others depend on personalities/relationships. Putting the consortium in place was easy thanks to the customer-service focus of the partners. Many thanks to the Minneapolis, Ramsey and Hennepin WSAs who suggested working directly with their dislocated worker partner agencies to minimize bureaucracy. The effectiveness of the EMC is due in large part to their dedication and focus on working together to make sure the needed services were available for their colleagues. We're lucky to have a high-quality EMC to work with. Finally, the innovative workshops and communications tools are easy to replicate. E-mails and websites makes it so much easier to keep job seekers informed.