

**Best Practices Recognition
Nomination Form
Submitted by Mark Jacobs for Dakota Scott Workforce Services**

**January Jump Start
A One-Day Conference for Job Seekers**

OVERVIEW

In the fall of 2002, the Dakota County Workforce Investment Board sought a fresh approach to job seeking for the many WorkForce Center customers who had been unemployed for more than a few months. The post 9-11 recession had severe consequences on employment nation-wide. Additionally, the WIB recognized the effect that the holidays could have on the long-term unemployed. In this context the idea of January Jump Start was born. This would be an up-beat event with top notch speakers and relevant break-out sessions that would give job seekers a boost to their efforts and spirits. It would literally jump start their job search. January Jump Start was first held on January 9-10, 2003 and has been held every January since then.

JOB SEEKER IMPACT

Since its debut, January Jump Start has attracted over 900 people. Job-seeker reaction has been stellar each year. 89% of attendees rate the event as excellent. Many expressed appreciation that their needs are acknowledged in this setting. Those customers who are also program participants credit the event with motivating them to pursue their goals with renewed vigor and to use the fresh ideas they get to improve their résumés and interviewing techniques.

There is something for everyone at January Jump Start. We have had well-known keynote presenters such as Amy Lindgren and Stevie Ray and other first rate speakers on topics such as resiliency, clockwise thinking (brain theory), stress management, humor in the work place, job seeking for folks over 40, job seeking for introverts, entrepreneurship and networking. We have bridged the technology gap with presentations on eFolio and other cutting edge technology. Jump Start has explored growth industries and occupations and always, by popular demand, includes sessions on interviewing.

The WIB is proud to offer this event without cost to participants, without any eligibility or other qualification. Again and again, customers have told us how much they appreciate the event, how it rejuvenates their job search and lifts their spirits.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

An event like January Jump Start, although it is targeted particularly to job seekers, cannot fail to have some impact on the community at large. First of all, January Jump Start raises awareness of the WorkForce Center system. The opportunity to market the event is also an opportunity to market the WorkForce Center. That we offer such an event to the community is a selling point when we are meeting with employers who recognize the value of this kind of public service. Second, employers who are involved in the event, typically as panelists, have an opportunity to promote their companies in a relaxed and positive setting.

IDENTIFICATION OF COLLABORATORS

January Jump Start is a true collaboration. Dakota Workforce Services partners with Dakota County Technical College, DEED/Dakota County Job Service and HIRED in the planning and execution of the event. Without these partners, the event would certainly fail. Additionally, ISEEK, DEED's LMI department, Inver Hills Community College and Dakota County have offered significant assistance. More than 20 businesses have collaborated with us in delivering information, especially on employer panels. In July 2005, the Dakota County Workforce Investment Board became the Dakota-Scott Workforce Investment Board, thus increasing our collaborative capacity with the new WSA structure. Scott County staff, of course, were involved in planning and executing the event in 2006 and will continue to be so. The WIB hopes to continue this event so long as there is need. The economy is brighter now than in 2002 when our planning began. Nevertheless, when we poll customers as to their interest in the event, they tell us to keep January Jump Start going.

LEVERAGED RESOURCES

We have had the benefit of many hours of professional assistance and consultation in the planning and executing of January Jump Start. In 2006 alone, we clocked 178 hours of time in partner planning and executing January Jump Start. This does not include collaboration from some of our speakers whose in-kind contribution helped keep the event within our budget.

REPLICATION

January Jump Start is entirely transferable. In fact, customers have suggested we hold the event in other parts of the State. It is a very simple formula – to create a top notch job-seeking event for customers. Because it has been such an exciting event with increased interest and exposure each year, organizations, businesses, and individuals have been eager to participate.