



MWCA 2006 BEST PRACTICES RECOGNITION NOMINATION FORM

WIB Name/WSA: Workforce Development, Inc., WSA 8

Submitted by: Jakki Trihey, on behalf of Randy Johnson, Executive Director

Attach a description (no more than two pages) describing the initiative.

Please return via e-mail or fax to Anne Olson by **Thursday, July 27.**
aolson@mncounties.org or (651) 224-6540

 (Leave this section blank -to be completed by judges)

Judge # _____

Criteria for Selection of Outstanding Best Practices	Maximum Points	Points Awarded
Overview describing the innovative best practice	25	
Jobseeker impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for jobseekers)	25	
Community impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for non-jobseekers)	20	
Identification of those involved, including collaborators	15	
Leveraging/alignment of outside resources	10	
Ability for use or replication by others	05	
TOTAL:	100	

On January 5, 2006, the SE MN WIB held a Strategic Planning Session. The overall focus of this session was to take a long-term look at the impact of globalization on our local economies and to organize and prioritize our optimal responses. During the discussions, two major themes became very apparent: 1) the workforce challenges facing our region are very real and require action; and 2) we need to raise the level of awareness held by the general population about these challenges. One specific initiative that came from the Strategic Planning Session was the development of the WIA Adult and Youth Career Scholarship Program.

Within the Career Scholarship Program, a portion of WIA Adult and WIA Youth program funding will be provided for classroom training by awarding scholarships rather than incidental vouchers. The intent of the scholarships is to help people age 21 and older get the education/training necessary to obtain a career in vital or "hot" Southeast Minnesota occupations.

Initially, the SE MN WIB expects to distribute 24 WIA Adult scholarships each school year, starting in the fall of 2006. The WIB will distribute another 24 WIA Youth scholarships each year, starting in the fall of 2007. Scholarships will be awarded twice yearly - in the spring and in the fall. Each scholarship will be worth up to \$3,500.00, and will target careers that are in high demand within the region. The WIB and its Industrial Sector Subcommittees (Manufacturing, Healthcare, Hi-Tech & Bioscience, and Services & Trades) determined the guidelines and rules for scholarship distribution. Employer representatives from the Subcommittees work with WDI staff to review applications and select awardees. At this point, the recipients of the Fall, 2006 scholarships have been announced.

A variety of benefits accompany this Career Scholarship Program. Jobseekers benefit by being eligible for scholarships targeted to a non-traditional population, including area learning center students, Adult Basic Education participants, part-time students, etc. They also benefit from learning about occupations where a 4-year college experience isn't the necessary path to success. Increased wage potential and the ability to place local people in local jobs are two additional benefits to area job seekers.

The SE MN WIB is able to impact the community through this Career Scholarship Program by marketing and sharing information within the community, the general public and the area high schools about the needs of industry in this area. Area employers are impacted by having access to a qualified pool of applicants for their high-demand jobs. Additionally, by sharing information about the industry needs and what the SE MN WIB is doing to meet those needs, we increase our chances of getting public donations to augment our scholarship fund, thereby potentially increasing the number of scholarships we are able to offer.

Currently, the funding for the Career Scholarship Program comes through the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program and the SE MN WIB. As stated earlier, we hope to be able to leverage community resources to increase that funding and positively affect a greater number of students.

We believe the use of the Career Scholarship Program speaks directly to our mission (to develop and advance the workforce of SE MN) and allows us to take real action in addressing the workforce challenges facing our region. We believe this program can very easily be replicated by other WIB's.