

NATIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CUSTOMER SERVICE AWARDS

National Awards Program

The National Customer Service Awards celebrate the products, projects, services, and programs that radiate service to workforce investment customers including individuals, businesses, and internal customers. Award winners exemplify what is best about the One-Stop system: partners working together to provide the highest quality, continuously improved services.

The 2002 catalogue presents an excellent opportunity to learn more about dozens of solutions that workforce development colleagues are implementing on behalf of customers. Fifty-four nominations were received from 29 State Workforce Agencies. The nominating agencies are congratulated on their advancements to improve and enhance the services they provide to their customers. The sharing of this information is also greatly appreciated, so that others may learn about the best practices in workforce investment.

Whether at the annual awards ceremony or back home in offices across the country, take a moment to try these ideas for your system, center or program. Through shared goals and ideas, together workforce professionals across the country are better reaching, serving, and satisfying customers into the new millennium.

From the Department of Labor and the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) come the winners of the DOL/NASWA 2002 National Customer Service Awards. These grant awards recognize successful, innovative state and local achievements and initiatives, and provide cash grants (\$5,000 - \$25,000) to the winning states. The funds are intended for system development and capacity building.

The 2002 winners:

- Washington:
Pyramid Award - Collaboration to Improve Customer Service
- Montana:
Compass Award - Leading Tools and Technology
- Oregon:
Compass Award - Leading Tools and Technology (honorable mention)
- Rhode Island
World Class Workforce Award - Professional Development/Capacity Building
- Nebraska
World Class Workforce Award - Professional Development/Capacity Building
- California
Architect of Change Award - Innovation in Customer Service
- Alaska
Prism Award - Service to Business
- Arizona
Prism Award - Service to Business (honorable mention)

Each of these projects was selected from a total of 148 State Workforce Agency nominations. They were reviewed by a volunteer panel of independent judges, and determined to be winners. The grant award is to recognize these promising practices that can benefit the entire national system. Information on the projects will be posted on the Promising Practices Consortium and WorkforceATM

websites, and there will be opportunities for peer-to-peer technical assistance among the other states.

About the Awards

The awards program...

- Recognizes successful, innovative state and local achievements and staff in providing high quality services to our customers.
- Publicizes outstanding state workforce agency projects and activities that effectively respond to critical workforce investment and development issues.
- Identifies state and local initiatives upon which to model and develop national programs. This is a study of success to build on “what works.”

The Architect of Change — Innovation in Customer

Service

The Architect of Change recognizes creativity and innovation in serving customers of the employment and training/workforce investment system. Emphasis is on customer indicators of quality and success.

Building A World-Class Workforce Award — Professional Development and Capacity Building

This is a “people” award for: leadership; training; a customer-focused reorganization; staff involvement and empowerment; effecting a cultural change — any area of professional development or building the capacity of staff to deliver quality customer services. The emphasis of the Building a World-Class Workforce Award is on the results of the project including internal customer satisfaction.

The Compass Award — Leading Tools and Technology

The leading tools and technology award recognizes an outstanding contribution to the development of new delivery methods for agency services; increasing access to information for customers; improved efficiencies for service delivery; time-saving automation; or other tools that improve customer services. The emphasis will be on project results including customer satisfaction.

Prism Award — Excellence in Serving Business

This award is designed to highlight workforce system practices at the state and local levels that exemplify understanding and meeting business needs in order to also serve the needs of workers.

The Pyramid Prize — Collaboration for Improved Customer Services

Pooling and combining resources across programs and agencies to solve reemployment problems for customers is critical to state workforce agency success. The Pyramid Prize recognizes a leader in collaboration, and is based on the degree to which multiple programs/funding streams are integrated and reflect the one-stop customer service philosophy; the number of partners and the degree of their participation; and customer feedback that demonstrates quality and success.

Selecting the Winners

The nominations were initially screened by a review team composed of USDOL representatives - for completeness and meeting nomination criteria. Potential award nominations were then forwarded to the panel of judges comprised of individuals not associated with the USDOL, but who are customers with expertise in the areas of workforce development and customer service.

This group of external customer judges recommended the winners and honorable mentions in each of the five categories to the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment and Training for final approval.

The judging panel used an evaluation/scoring criteria to ensure that the winning nominations are exemplary and demonstrate results in improved customer satisfaction.

Recognizing the Winners

The U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration presents winners with \$25,000 and a trophy symbolic of the award. (Honorable Mention recipients receive a \$5,000 award.) This money is designated to make the winning programs and staff even more successful.

One advantage to this award money is that it provides winners with a streamlined funding source for improving or expanding their project. Past winners have used funds to take pilot projects statewide or share the knowledge with other Workforce Agencies across the country.

Winners of the National Customer Service Awards will be honored at the 2002 Annual Conference of the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, September 23-26, 2002, in Kansas City, Missouri. In addition to receiving the awards, a plaque bearing the name of the award-winning agency and program is displayed at the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, DC.

This catalogue provides descriptions of the many projects nominated. Further details are available via the Workforce ATM at <http://www.WorkforceATM.org> or by contacting the submitting state directly.

Winner of the Architect of Change Award

California

The California Youth Council Institute

Description

The California Youth Council Institute (YCi) was established in July 2001 by the California Workforce Investment Board (CalWIB) to provide technical assistance to California's 50 Youth Councils (YCs). YCi is managed and delivered by New Ways to Work (New Ways) and the California Workforce Association (CWA).

The basic services provided by YCi include the development and distribution of frameworks and tools to guide the work of local YCs, training and support in strategic planning activities, the development and support of a peer learning network, training in the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act's (WIA) ten elements, the collection and distribution of best practices, providing formal communication between the State Youth Council (SYC) and local councils, engaging in continuous improvement activities and being responsive to local needs.

YCi is focused on building a community of practice, connecting peers to identify issues and challenges, and to developing and sharing solutions. YCi uses a just-in-time approach to provide external supports and training to YCs and applies state-of-the-art change technologies in its work. It

fosters communication and formal connections between the state and local communities. Most importantly, YCi has had a demonstrated impact on local practice, including the adoption of broad and systemic goals for local Youth Councils and the expanded engagement of youth in leadership positions.

Project Basis

The basis for developing YCi began with conversations within and among the staff of the California Workforce Investment Board (CalWIB) and the California Department of Education (CDE) regarding the need to assist California's 50 Youth Councils in developing comprehensive youth-serving systems and expanding their scope well beyond the regulatory mandates of the Workforce Investment Act. Identification of the following needs helped the departments determine a strategy and develop a set of goals and objectives for the project:

- Local Youth Councils were struggling to understand their role in pursuing an all youth, one system agenda as described in DOL documents such as "Recipes for Success;"
- Local education agencies indicated frustration with the inconsistency in the make-up and the perceived roles and responsibilities of Local Youth Councils;
- Public comment at various statewide conferences and workshops consistently requested support from the state to implement local systems able to serve all youth; and
- Local Youth Councils also indicated a need for help in attracting youth members and in recruiting youth program participants.

Operations

Both New Ways and CWA are customer responsive, continuous improvement organizations. Their core beliefs as technical assistance and support providers embrace the notion that policy should be driven by practice and as such the methodologies applied through YCi are driven by customer identified needs and priorities. New Ways and CWA regularly poll YCi participants to shape the priorities and activities of the project. YCi also distributes, collects and analyzes evaluations at every convening of the project. These priorities are reflected in the content and delivery of targeted training and activities.

Content conference call topics have included Youth Involvement in Youth Councils, Youth Council Self-Assessment, Resource Mapping, Community Outcomes, Engaging Stakeholders and WIA Implementation Issues. In direct response to a need for the collection and dissemination of practical examples of exemplary practices being conducted by local youth councils, 32 Yci ideas were generated. These profiles of youth council activities include process, tools, lessons learned and contact information. They are posted on the YCi web site and utilized regularly by YCi members (1,500 hits over the year). YCi also has conducted "on-demand" training for 90 people on the Daisy Wheel Model for comprehensive service delivery.

Results

YCi's performance against original objectives has been met or exceeded in all areas. YCi represents a new idea for states in the workforce development system – that of the state being a collaborative partner with third-party organizations in encouraging local providers and systems in pursuing a broad agenda – well beyond basic compliance. The selection of a powerful partnership between two of the state's premier non-profit organizations has produced remarkable results in just the first year of operation. These partners have demonstrated the best of collaborative efforts, working closely with the state as partners (not funders) and the local councils as members of a network (not clients).

YCi is the only external statewide capacity-building initiative focused on supporting broad and visionary objectives for YCs in the country. The project's tools and frameworks were formally adopted by the SYC and also provided framework to its workgroups. YCi has impacted local councils

significantly, providing a rational and clear road map for councils stuck in the process of defining their work. YCi participants have consistently reported that the YCi experience and tools have helped move their work significantly forward. Eighty-four percent of the state's youth councils have participated in YCi orientations and 60 percent brought teams to the YCi strategic planning institute. Sixty-six percent of statewide survey respondents reported that they have formally adopted the YCi frameworks to guide their work, while 98 percent feel that YCi is a worthwhile initiative.

Contact Information

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Co-Winner of the Building a World Class Workforce Award

Nebraska

Workforce Ambassador Continuous Improvement Journey

Description

Over a period of four years, Nebraska Workforce Development has transformed its culture to operate similar to an innovative, creative private sector company; challenging not only themselves, but also other governmental agencies to operate like a business. By implementing the educational curriculum, "Investment In Excellence" to teach staff how to think effectively to create results, agency leaders empowered staff to find the solutions to challenges for themselves, both professionally and personally. With the implementation of the continuous improvement journey they changed the "company" into one of employee input, improved communication, and continuous evaluation to make improvements where needed.

Project Basis

In 1997 the Nebraska Workforce Development – Department of Labor (NWD-DOL) received a Workforce Development grant from the U.S. Department of Labor and was challenged to build a seamless system of services in collaboration with the partner agencies. Getting staff on board, acting as if they are part of a system of services, and determining customer satisfaction became key factors of success in the new system. NWD-DOL administered a customer satisfaction survey (NASWA's [then ICESA] Customer Satisfaction survey) to staff and customers. The data was compiled and subsequently used to improve customer satisfaction.

Operations

NWD-DOL is committed to using the survey data to improve customer satisfaction of staff. Since 1997, NWD-DOL implemented several capacity building activities to address the stated needs of internal customers by: providing customer satisfaction training to all local office staff (building on the survey results); providing training to teach internal and system staff how to conduct process improvements at the local level; and, using process improvement tools to make improvements.

At the same time, the survey data highlighted the need for NWD-DOL to clarify its vision and to involve all levels of staff in the transformation of the "company." In response, they:

- Developed a new vision statement that unified the "company" and is driven by the many changes in the evolving Workforce Development System;
- Created agency-wide Workforce Ambassador teams to address the critical issues facing the "company." These teams consist of a cross-section of staff, involving all levels of staff in shaping the future;

- Offered Investment in Excellence educational curriculum to all staff and Workforce Development partners to help employees learn how to respond positively and to take charge of the perpetual change; and,
- Made changes in all of the office areas of NWD-DOL to improve the services delivered to external and internal customers.

As NWD-DOL began to implement its third year of the Workforce Development grant, they realized their staff and/or customers did not recognize how far they had come. They sought outside input on how to tie all the good things they were doing together to make even bigger strides in transforming their culture. Based on their efforts, they created a six-step continuous improvement journey (using Baldrige criteria) to unify all activities under the continuous improvement umbrella.

Results

Using the continuous improvement journey, NWD-DOL re-administered the internal customer satisfaction survey and found they had improved their internal customer satisfaction by 67 percent during a time of tremendous change and turmoil. They are now responding to the second survey results proving continuous improvement is not just an initiative. The following is a list of improvements they have made in transforming their culture:

- Provided over 40 system-training opportunities over the last four years with 2,548 NWD-DOL staff and 2,489 system partners attending for a total of 5,037 system staff receiving training;
- Improved communication by publishing minutes of directors' meetings, managers' meetings;
- Created and implemented a new employee orientation program focusing on the services NWD-DOL provides and how they interface with the workforce development system. Over 480 current and new employees have attended a session;
- Used 50+ continuous improvement teams to improve processes for customers;
- Recognized exceptional efforts by awarding "Workforce Ambassador Keys" to worthy individuals and teams. Over 150 staff and partners have received "Keys To the Future;"
- Provided training at all managers' meetings to build the skills of middle management staff; and,
- NWD-DOL Commissioner/CEO implemented a business model in January of 2000 for the new organizational structure consolidating 10 Director positions into six. Directors are now called Executive Directors and serve on the Executive Board. The word "divisions" was dropped and replaced with "Office of," supporting the culture to be an organization united, not divided.

NWD-DOL is researching the possibility of implementing an "Organizational Effectiveness Survey" which is the only cultural change survey that is validated by the American Psychological Society, to further determine improvements needed for the organization to continue responding effectively to the rapidly changing world.

Contact Information

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Co-Winner of the Building a World Class Workforce Award

Rhode Island

Using Labor Market Information

Description

Using Labor Market Information is a statewide training and education project designed to help practitioners from employment, education, economic development and related fields improve client

services. It consists of: a practical, flexible 11-course training curriculum developed in cooperation with the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (DLT)/Northeastern University to help practitioners access, understand, gain practice in the use of and improve their ability to interpret various types of labor market information; a public education series based on the curriculum to inform businesses, parent groups and community leaders about labor market developments and their implications for Rhode Island's workforce and overall economy; and, training for managers and agency heads to incorporate labor market information into long-term strategic planning activities.

Project Basis

Over the past ten years, Rhode Island has experienced sweeping changes in its economy, characterized by slower than average labor force growth and a shift from manufacturing to service industries that require significantly greater education and training investments on the part of workers. These and other developments prompted the Human Resource Investment Council, along with the Department of Labor and Training, to assess the state's capacity to understand these trends and make necessary improvements in education, training and employment services. The Rhode Island DLT commissioned the Northeastern University Center for Labor Market Studies to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment among internal and external customers of the state's workforce development system.

Over 125 individuals were contacted during the assessment. Their responses indicated a need for better job-related information in 20 categories including basic labor force concepts and measures, industry employment levels, the specific needs of diverse client populations, access to sources of state and local economic data, industry projections, and occupational staffing patterns. Participants expressed a strong desire for training in how to translate labor market demand information into the education and skill requirements of actual jobs, as well as more information about education and training programs available to their clients.

The principal goal of the project was to improve the career planning abilities and labor market experiences of Rhode Island residents through: a) the development of a common language among workforce development practitioners and stakeholders from social services, education, government and the private sector; b) the creation of a shared framework for analyzing, interpreting and addressing labor market trends; c) the application of knowledge about the composition and operation of local and state labor markets to client assessment, career counseling and employer relationship-building activities, particularly at the One-Stop centers; and d) increased cooperation across agencies and institutions.

Operations

At the heart of "Using Labor Market Information" is an eleven-course curriculum based on the expressed needs of internal customers and their desire to provide better service to an increasingly diverse group of clients. Course content addressed a range of practitioner backgrounds, ranging from "Introduction to Labor Market Information," to "Disability and the Rhode Island Labor Market." Several courses built competency with Internet-based client assessment and career information resources, such as O*NET and Rhode Island's Jobseeker program. Others adapted easily to use with public audiences, such as "LMI for High School Students and Parents."

Formal training sessions ranged from two-day intensive programs for groups such as the Economic Development Council of Rhode Island, to multi-course sequential programs offered over several weeks or months.

Results

Project objectives were either met or exceeded in every category. Over 900 individuals, twice as many as was originally anticipated, received training and information. The range of participants in the

formal training program reflected the desired mix of education and experience levels and job categories—high-level administrators (19 percent), supervisors (15 percent), and direct service personnel (66 percent). Participants averaged 5.2 years in their current job, an indicator that the knowledge and skills acquired will continue to benefit the home agencies and institutions for several years. Thirty-eight sessions were conducted—double the number that was originally contracted.

Using Labor Market Information was designed to achieve results on three levels. It increased the knowledge, skills and effectiveness of managers and practitioners by means of a customer-driven training process. Further, it improved the capacity of One-Stop centers and vocational rehabilitation, job counseling and training programs to deliver high quality training through direct contact with trainees. A “train the trainer” effect took place subsequently as trainees shared what they learned in the sessions with colleagues and began integrating their new knowledge into the operations of their agencies.

The project’s ambitious program of public speaking engagements introduced many business leaders, elected officials and educational administrators to the existence of in-depth, authoritative labor market research findings and data sources about Rhode Island they could use to solve practical problems. These programs helped create additional demand for sophisticated labor market information among individuals at that level and helped keep workforce issues at the top of their agenda.

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Winner of the Compass Award

Montana

Montana’s Integrated System To Improve Customer Service (MISTICS)

Description

Montana’s Integrated System To Improve Customer Service, known as MISTICS, is an automated system developed to bring Montana’s unemployment insurance program to the forefront using the latest technology to provide fast, accurate, and satisfying service to customers. The project combined business process reengineering and automation.

MISTICS combined numerous unemployment insurance (UI) legacy systems into one integrated database in addition to adding an imaging system that electronically scans and stores all claims documents and uses a workflow system to route work to staff. MISTICS applied a graphical user interface system, which is easy for users to navigate. The integration of imaging and workflow provides a streamlined tool for staff.

Project Basis

Prior to MISTICS, a claimant would have to call into one of two phone centers to file their claim. Limited information was available electronically on the system. Most of the fact finding and determination information was processed by hand, mailed to claimants and stored in paper files in a large motorized file system. If a claimant called to find out what was happening on their claim, the Customer Service Representative (CSR) or Adjudicator would often have to locate the paper file. All correspondence was routed manually to the appropriate person and work had to be processed sequentially to keep the legal record in tact and to ensure the staff person had all relevant documents to make their decision.

In conjunction with the MISTICS project, Montana launched a business process reengineering project organizing the Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) and Adjudicators into teams so they could serve the customer from beginning to end in the UI system. As part of the MISTICS project, every business process was diagrammed and streamlined, and then designed electronically to accommodate the new process.

Operations

MISTICS combined all UI benefits applications into one integrated database in a client/server environment using Oracle tools. MISTICS incorporates four major systems as well as numerous manual and PC-based systems. MISTICS is unique because nearly everything staff needs to serve customers is on the desktop. With the flick of a screen, Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) can answer employer and claimant's questions quickly and accurately.

MISTICS includes an imaging system that barcodes all outgoing documents. When documents are returned, they are scanned into the system, indexed, and routed through a workflow system to the appropriate person for processing. Documents are automatically stored in the imaging system and can be retrieved by any user. Within two minutes the documents are immediately available to every individual in the organization with the appropriate security.

The project had four main phases: requirements, design, development, and testing. At the end of the testing period the division participated in a six-week long model office test environment. Trainers developed material and trained internal staff in the new processes and computer system.

Prior to starting the reengineering project, the agency solicited opinions from employers and claimants through a claimant survey and several focus groups. Many of their suggestions were incorporated into the MISTICS design and led to the reduction of duplicate notices, improved decision timelines, ability to discuss multiple claims with employers, and enhancements to applications. Each project team had experts from each of the major functional areas of the program as well as members from each phone center. Customers from other state agencies such as Child Support and Revenue became partners in designing the system to meet their customers' needs.

More than 80 percent of the staff were involved in application development and testing and everyone had input in how the system would work. KPMG Consulting also committed significant resources and at one time had 27 people and eight subcontractors on the project. The project took three years from requirements to production, which occurred on April 7, 2001.

Results

Montana's benefits performance has improved significantly through the combination of reengineering and automating processes. In spite of workload increases, performance in key areas has increased, which is a strong testimonial to the success of the MISTICS system given the change curve required for learning the new system.

The MISTICS system, including workflow and imaging, was created using an investment of \$7.5 million. MISTICS' efficiencies allowed staff to be reassigned, thus averting costs and allowing them to lessen the impact of inflation, and put more emphasis on program integrity. The UI division has realized approximately \$26,000 savings per year with the switch to imaging in the file and storage areas.

The new system has made it possible for the department to deliver on the promise of the system's name. It has definitely "improved customer service."

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Winner of the Prism Award

Alaska

Anchorage Business Connection

Description

The Employment Services Management Team developed the Business Connection to provide more intensive outreach and services to Anchorage area employers. The team provided employers with more qualified applicants and workspace at Anchorage/Mat-Su One-Stop Job Centers for targeted recruitment. To better accommodate for targeted recruitment. To better accommodate employers, staff were assigned a more flexible work schedule to suit employer hours, applicant screenings were based on employer criteria, a large network of employment services were offered, and partners' case managers were made available to refer qualified people with few, if any, employment barriers. To better conduct interviews and recruitment, employers using the area job centers were provided with phones, fax machines, copiers, computers with Internet capability, and a customer-service oriented, highly trained staff. The team also put employers in touch with one another to share mutually beneficial information.

Project Basis

Two years ago, the Anchorage/Mat-Su supervisory team, encouraged by the Employment Security Division's Director and Assistant Director of Employment Services, met to discuss ways it could accommodate the growing needs and concerns of community employers. Employers said they lacked qualified applicants for their jobs and required additional assistance in conducting large-scale recruitments, interviewing, testing and assessment, and group employee orientations. Many of these businesses were relatively small or medium sized businesses lacking the resources to find and hire employees they needed to grow and expand.

The team listened to employers' needs during One-Stop Job Center Local Advisory Committee and Chamber of Commerce meetings and when taking job listings in-person or on the phone. They also conducted employer focus groups, made cold-call visits, and met with employers during regularly scheduled Workforce Investment Board meetings. The increased participation of the private sector supported by the Workforce Investment Act and the formal and informal feedback received from employers made it clear that more had to be done to identify and respond to the needs of businesses. With the idea that the employer is the primary "customer" and the "product" is a competitive and qualified job applicant, the team pursued the Business Connection with the short-term goal of acquiring an "Employer-a-Day" using expanded services.

Employment Services' staff reviewed how local employer needs were managed and then initiated changes to improve its connection with community employers. This included an internal program review, with feedback on how the Job Center system could better meet local employer needs. This met the service goals of the Local Workforce Investment Board by identifying ways to continuously improve operations and service to businesses.

Operations

To begin, the core "Job Order Control" team was relocated to an office accommodating a private "business" entrance. A 60-seat conference room was designated for large employee orientations, recruitment conferences, and sessions for filling out employer-specific applications. The entire first floor of the Anchorage Midtown Job Center was reorganized to provide space for employers to

conduct job interviews and to provide interview space at five other regional locations. Quickly it became apparent that private businesses have a different clock than state government; therefore, several employees were budgeted for overtime to provide top-notch, convenient customer service during evenings and weekends – an effort over and above what is usually allowed to support traditional job fairs and other outreach activity. Employers were also offered access to phone menus to connect job seekers with “hot” job opportunities.

The Division Director and Assistant Director for Employment Services initiated Continuous Improvement and Strategic Planning initiatives. In support of these initiatives, the division sponsored employer focus groups and an internal statewide review of business services to identify how well the Employment Security Division was meeting the needs of Alaska businesses. Regionally, local offices were encouraged to seek feedback from businesses on how well Employment Services was meeting their needs. The Anchorage Job Centers used feedback from employers to review internal operations and services. Based on the results of this local review, a number of significant changes or initiatives were made.

Results

The project has proven its success by achieving the following goals:

- On June 27, 2002, reached an unprecedented 10,000 job orders for PY 2002;
- Achieved a 66.64 percent increase in job order activity for 2000;
- Achieved a 68.24 percent increase in job order activity for 2001;
- Listed approximately 200 jobs weekly. Area job seeker activity reached 1,000 customers per week;
- Increased the market share of both employers and jobseekers using services;
- Increased employer outreach and marketing by participating on the local workforce investment board, various committees of the board, the local Chamber of Commerce, and professional associations;
- Provided improved access to services via the Internet and the online job order;
- Utilized mass media and targeted marketing opportunities on a statewide basis; and
- Concentrated job fair activities and partnering with other Workforce Investment Act (WIA) agencies to reduce and leverage costs and improve outreach.

Contact Information

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Winner of the Pyramid Prize

Washington

Eastern Washington Agriculture and Food Processing Partnership

Description

The Eastern Washington Agriculture and Food Processing Partnership was created to meet employers' needs to train incumbent workers in two of Washington's largest and most labor-intensive industries – food processing and farming. The program fundamentally changed how training institutions and government entities develop new training for existing workers.

The partnership called on broad private and public representation that included organized labor, six state agencies, four Workforce Development Area directors, the U.S. Department of Labor, private and public training providers, and a community organization to develop a solution to a widening skill

gap problem. They collaborated to develop high-quality training sessions that are affordable and meaningful to employees, employers and the entire workforce system.

Federal, state, and private organizations have contributed nearly \$2 million and extensive expertise to the project. Participating employers responded positively by matching each public training dollar spent with \$1.47 of their own.

Project Basis

Employers and growers have customarily relied on a large, migrant workforce, which moved between crops as the season progressed. Labor force needs and skill training have taken a back seat to the more immediate task of moving goods and products to market. Grower and processor association directors struggled with their memberships to confront long-term changing workforce trends. Both industries faced the challenge of infusing the workforce with higher skill levels to remain competitive.

A labor management committee was formed in 1995 to explore what could be done to address significant permanent changes in worker training and keep up with the latest production practices. New processing and storage techniques signaled an increased demand for workers who understood the role of technology in moving products to the market. The elimination of lower-paying jobs and the need for technically-advanced worker skill sets set these business leaders on a path toward a new commitment to workforce development and short-term occupational training.

A partnership emerged which spanned the food and agricultural processing industries. Their goal was to take charge of an incumbent worker training initiative customized to the expressed needs of business customers.

Operations

The training developed by the partnership is more than the product of economy of scale. It springboards from industry standards and skill sets that cut across individual employers and products. The design gives employers new flexibility when picking the time and place for workers. This is especially important when harvesting and processing agricultural goods that drive the weekly schedules of the two industries. Moving those goods to market takes priority, so training must be compatible with time-sensitive work schedules.

The training also must be of value to employees. Workers must see a clear path to better paying and more secure careers in return for staying on the job and in the community. Classes filled with individuals from the two industries helps workers decide how their skills can be applied in other industries and what their next career step might be. Certificates of completion and subsequent pay raises reinforce the importance of the short-term training.

As founding members of the partnership, the Northwest Food Processors Association and the Washington Growers League shaped the direction of the plan. They successfully communicated industry needs to state and federal program administrators and secured funding to implement the plan. Guided by the vision of a more automated and technical workplace, association leadership helped walk the partnership through the necessary steps of identifying jobs common to both industries and then setting skill standards associated with these jobs. Translating these jobs and skills into a specific, employer friendly, skill gap reduction model required enormous commitment and energy, but ultimately enabled the partners to be more informed consumers of the training they acquire.

Results

Since January 2001, the partnership has exceeded its goal of training 400 employees by more than 75 percent, ultimately providing 785 training slots for current workers. Trainers developed 26 customized

courses to meet agricultural-sector needs in an efficient, industry-friendly manner and provide specific career advancement opportunities. They delivered 38 unique training events at 100 work sites for more than 32 companies.

Training was completed at an average cost of \$450-500 per individual, per session. These courses are delivered locally, at times and locations that are convenient to both employers and workers. This represents a substantial cost savings to employers who previously had to send workers out of the area or out-of-state for technical training in areas such as ammonia refrigeration, programmable logic control and maintenance mechanics. Trainees achieved a wage increase of \$300-\$600 over a four-month period following training.

Workers now have the skills they need to earn better wages and become more competitive in today's job market, and businesses are better positioned to be more productive.

Contact Information

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Honorable Mention Compass Award

OREGON

The Oregon Labor Market Information System (OLMIS)

Description

The Oregon Labor Market Information System (OLMIS) is the Oregon Employment Department's workforce and economic information Internet website (<http://www.qualityinfo.org>). It provides economic, employment, and educational information and more to the business community, jobseekers, career counselors, students, policy makers, analysts, workforce development partners and others. OLMIS is designed to give users access to the Oregon Employment Department's workforce and economic information and employment resources without the limitations of time or location. OLMIS is part of the department's efforts to allow people to make informed decisions based on high-quality information.

Project Basis

The project team used numerous focus groups around the state to provide input into the development of OLMIS. This input served to validate the need for improved access to workforce, economic and career information and provided unique and innovative ideas to the project team.

The goals for OLMIS remain the same as when it began. Developing a leading-edge website that:

- Provides ever expanding and universal access to workforce, economic and career information;
- Increases satisfaction with the employment service;
- Increases efficiency by allowing customers to help themselves while freeing staff to provide in-depth analysis to those customers that need it;
- Includes linkages to other sources of information;
- Employs dynamic web pages to allow customized LMI screens based on the information needs of the user; and,
- Provides one-stop access to the breadth of workforce information available through the Oregon Employment Department and partner agencies.

Operations

While OLMIS has been very successful over the last five years, OLMIS has not rested on its laurels.

Based on feedback and requests from customers the website has been under continuous improvement and development. The Quick Stats, One-Page Summary, OLMIS Classroom and new enlarged Region 'zine are all recent improvements or additions to OLMIS that were created as a direct result of customer requests.

OLMIS is "Bobby Approved" to meet ADA standards for websites, and the design team is regularly given opportunities to attend training to improve their skills and learn best practices in website design. As improvements in hardware, operating system, database, software and web server technology have become available, OLMIS has taken advantage of them. OLMIS uses Java, Oracle, and open source technologies in providing customers with innovative and secure solutions and access to workforce information.

The Oregon Labor Market Information System will continue to evolve and change to meet the needs and desires of customers. In the next year, Oregon will be redesigning the Educational Information Center, adding an Industry Information Center and a Geographical Information Systems component to OLMIS — all based on requests and suggestions from educators, students, business operators, researchers and other customers.

The interactive, dynamic nature of OLMIS allows customers to access information that is pertinent to their needs without having to sift through unwanted and unneeded information. For example, the one page Occupational Summary report provides easy access to employment projections, wage information, industries of employment, occupations with similar skills, and current job openings for over 720 individual occupations. The OLMIS classroom provides high school teachers with curricula designed to teach students how to research jobs and careers both in the classroom and when they are out of school. The Quick Stats on the OLMIS front page allows quick and easy access to statewide and county unemployment rates. The new regional pages allow a customer to access workforce and economic information, job openings, educational and training opportunities, and workforce development agency information specific to a region without having to sort through statewide information.

OLMIS was the first Internet-based workforce and economic information web site. There are several other sites that now deliver state specific or national workforce and economic information; however, OLMIS is still unique in its mix of timely and relevant articles, and career, educational, and occupational exploration tools. The breadth and depth of the information available on OLMIS is still unequalled by any other similar workforce information tool.

Results

If the increase in the number of customers using OLMIS can be used a measure of success, OLMIS is satisfying customers' needs. In October of 1999 when OLMIS Version 2 was released, it received 36,278 page loads and 2,198 different Internet addresses visited the site. In February 2002 there were 31,814 different Internet addresses visiting the site. In May 2002 there were 474,584 page loads.

Use of the site increased 1,400 percent between 1997 and 1998. OLMIS V.2 was released in 1999. Since then, site usage has increased over 1,300 percent, averaging 25,000+ visitors and almost 400,000 page loads per month, over the last four months.

Contact Information

Tom Fuller, Communications Manager, Oregon Employment Department, 875 Union Street, NE, (503) 947-1301, thomas.e.fuller@state.or.us.

Honorable Mention Prism Award

Arizona Career Expo 2002

Description

Career Expo 2002 was a job fair that provided direct access to 186 employers with positions to fill, as well as access to "One-Stop on the Road," a complete One-Stop center where employers could submit job orders for immediate entry into the system, and applicants could self register, conduct online job search and receive immediate referrals.

The Arizona Job Service has held many job fairs, but this was the first one designed as a result of employer input, sponsored and financed by employer organizations, and one which encompassed a wide variety of governmental partners who are all involved with employment programs.

Project Basis

The Employment Security Administration (ESA) had previously organized and operated an annual career expo with the help of local office staff from ESA offices located in Maricopa County. For Career Expo 2002, ESA joined the Valley Employment Partnership, (VEP) which consisted of the City of Phoenix Workforce Information Network, Maricopa Workforce Connection, and the Maricopa Skill Center. In addition to the four VEP partners, working relationships were developed with other DES internal entities such as the Rehabilitation Services Administration, the JOBS Administration, and the Aging and Adult Services Administration. Other partners included the Arizona office of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Employment Consortium for the Empowerment of People with Disabilities, the Governor's State Rehabilitation Council, Phoenix Job Corps, Communities in Schools, Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service, and the Maricopa Community College District. These were all organizations that had previously held individual job fairs at different times and locations, and who were drawing from the same pool of employers for participation.

Operations

The financial sponsor for Career Expo 2002 was the Arizona Employers' Advisory Council (AZ EAC), a non-profit organization comprised of members from the private business sector in partnership with government. The program sponsor for the event was Jobing.com, a private sector employer.

One of the first tasks accomplished by Jobing.com staff was to establish a special web site to promote the event and to serve as a means for employers to register online using a credit card transaction. Media coverage included radio and television announcements as well as interviews with ESA staff and company representatives who agreed to be present for the taping. Other marketing tools were posters, flyers, a billboard, and inserts mailed with 90,000 unemployment insurance (UI) benefit checks.

An integral piece of the event was the establishment of a mini One-Stop career center that occupied about 20 percent of the available space in the Arizona State Fair Exposition Building where Career Expo 2002 was held. The atmosphere for attendees was similar to what they would experience on a visit to any of the One-Stop centers throughout the state. All of the agencies and programs previously identified participated in the One-Stop center. A system was established so that the jobseeker had an opportunity to register online with the Job Service and/or any of the other participating programs. Twelve online computers were set up at the entrance to the One-Stop area. There were staff members from the Rehabilitation Services Administration to assist job seekers with disabilities, and two of the computers were modified with assistive technology, including Braille. Jobseekers could also

job search via the Internet and job search instructional packets and One-Stop/employment services office directories were provided.

Results

There were 2,223 job orders in February, 2002, which was used as a benchmark. In March (the month of Career Expo 2002) there were 3,038 job orders, an increase of 815. In April there were 2,959 job orders and 2,699 for the month of May. Although the size of the increase was smaller for April and May, it still shows a significant increase over February, with no known difference in the local labor market or economy.

Tracking systems were installed in the automated systems in order to monitor job search progress of those individuals who self-registered at the One-Stop center and to track job order/referral results subsequent to the day of the event. Aggressive advance marketing resulted in 16,000 participants attending the one-day event. Employers also took hundreds of additional resumes with them for possible future consideration. 1,816 verifiable hires resulted from referrals to employers who provided job orders at the expo, including 141 hires that occurred the day of the event.

The exit evaluation furnished to all participating employers resulted in a 90 percent approval rating, the result of the deep involvement of the employer community and their commitment to assist us in achieving success.

Contact Information

David Laster, Program Administrator, Arizona Employment Security Administration 1789 West Jefferson St. Site Code 910A, Phoenix, Arizona 85007, (602) 542-3667, dlaster@mail.de.state.az.us.

Architect of Change Nominations

Kansas

Shawnee County Non-Custodial Project

The Judiciary and workers in the child support enforcement field were frustrated with non-custodial parents that were brought before the court on contempt charges for non-payment of child support. In worst case scenarios the court sentences the non-custodial parent to jail.

The court is often reluctant to impose a sentence for failure to pay child support as it costs taxpayers more to support the parent in jail (\$78 a day in Shawnee County, Kansas) than the parent's total monthly child support obligation. Additionally, there is little chance that a parent will find employment and begin paying child support while in jail. Work release programs had been explored; however, they are generally a privilege for those who have earned trust, and child support obligators are perceived as receiving "preferential" treatment.

Julie Elder, the Topeka Area Chief of Child Support Enforcement began exploring the idea of incorporating the child support enforcement process with the Welfare-to-Work program (administered by Heartland Works) where non-custodial parents were helped to find jobs and provided other services to assist them in becoming gainfully employed. Prior experience had shown that without the court ordering participation, individuals would not complete the program. If the court would order non-custodial parents to complete the program, participant numbers would grow and more non-custodial parents would receive assistance in obtaining jobs.

The Honorable Judge Terry L. Bullock, who presides over contempt for failure to pay child support, endorsed the idea and implemented a nine-month pilot program where non-custodial parents who

owed child support consented to be ordered into the Welfare-to-Work program as an alternative to the current contempt process.

The successful pilot program was completed in April 2001. It augmented more than \$100,000 collected since August 2000, and approximately 200 children were positively affected by their parents' successful participation in the program. Additionally, Judge Bullock received the Judge of the Year award from the National Child Support Enforcement Association, due in large part to his involvement with this project.

For more information, contact Roger Aeschliman, Deputy Secretary, Kansas Department of Human Resources, 401 SW Topeka Boulevard, Topeka, Kansas 66603, (785) 296-8067, rogera@hr.state.ks.us.

Maine Career and Learning Connections

Through a collaborative effort between the Maine Department of Education, the Maine Department of Labor and Maine PBS, Maine residents are benefiting from a unique partnership that breaks new ground to deliver and enhance lifelong educational services. These three statewide organizations are combining their expertise and educational resources to create an on-air public television programming service — free of charge.

The Career and Learning Connections (CLC) partnership launched on January 7th, 2002, when Maine PBS premiered a new education programming block that is broadcast every weekday afternoon. This show provides learners of all ages with a variety of programs that offer professional development, workforce training, and adult lifelong learning services.

The Workplace Essential Skills and GED Connections broadcast series enhance the existing education services offered via local adult education programs and the Maine Department of Labor's Career Center professional training services. The Workplace Essential Skills series includes 24 half-hour lessons that teach adults how to improve their skills in finding a job or doing an existing job with greater competence. The GED Connections features 39 half-hour programs covering the five major subject areas of the new GED Exam and reviews test preparation and strategies.

Both of these products provide academic and workplace skills content delivered through the context of workplace scenarios. These products and their multidisciplinary delivery options are valuable to employers for incumbent worker training, as well as jobseekers needing skills upgrade or enhancements.

CLC is establishing a national model through a unique partnership that offers new multidisciplinary educational content and provides unique delivery mechanisms that extend the services to all stakeholders—in homes, at work sites, and in schools. One measurement tool indicates that more than 12,000 adult learners, both male and female, primarily in the age category of 18 to 25 years of age, accessed this new service during the month of February alone.

An outstanding achievement in and of itself is the formal working partnership created by these three statewide organizations, collaborating to better serve the needs of Maine residents. Although still in the early stages, this project has already raised the visibility of Career Centers and Adult Education and fostered great communication between the agencies to better meet the needs of their customers, and strengthen Maine's current workforce and future workforce through professional development, classroom content, and lifelong learning services.

For more information, contact Tim McLellan, Acting Director, Bureau of Employment Services, Maine Department of Labor, 55 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333, (207) 624-6390, tim.mclellan@state.me.us.

Michigan Advocacy Program

Advocacy is an innovative, public/private collaboration program that assists the under-served participant population in contested claims for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits. Customers receive information, consultation, and representation at their unemployment insurance hearings from qualified independent contractors (Advocates), with a minimum of process, at no cost.

Advocates must pass a UI knowledge examination and contract with the state to provide services as outlined by the program's administrative guidelines. They are selected by the customer (not assigned by the Agency) and provide an independent and objective review of the facts in the claim and represent the customer at their hearing.

Advocates provide three levels of service:

- Information - Fact Sheets covering the specific issues involved in the claim and the hearing process in general are made available by Advocacy program staff after the initial contact;
- Consultation - Prior to the hearing, the facts involved in the customer's claim as they relate to unemployment law are discussed by the Advocate with the customer. Information about the hearing process and procedures are also covered; and
- Representation - After the consultation, the Advocate accompanies the customer to the hearing and acting as the representative, presents oral arguments before the Administrative Law Judge.

The program design uses a small number of centralized public staff and a large number of part-time private contracts. The program has been successful as it provides a level playing field for customers in disputed decision hearings, and customer friendly "self service" explanations of all significant UI issues are made available in branch offices, on the Internet and by mail. A customer group comprised of 50 percent winners and 50 percent losers who disagree strongly enough to pursue an administrative hearing, indicated that 88.3 percent of them would use the program again.

For more information, contact David Plawecki, Deputy Director, Department of Consumer and Industry Services, Bureau of Workers' and Unemployment Compensation, Cadillac Building, Suite 13-650, 3024 West Grand Boulevard, Detroit, Michigan 48202, (313) 456-2403, PlaweckiDave@michigan.gov.

Michigan Thumb Area Michigan Works! AUTO-MATION 2002

There is no greater positive impact on the workplace than enhancing the work ethic of future employees. The Thumb Area Michigan Works! Agency in partnership with Ford Motor Company, Learning Designs, Inc. and Questech designed and piloted AUTO-MATION 2002 — training built around learning the 21st century work ethic. This work ethic includes not only showing up on time, being clean and conveying a willingness to learn, but also retention of a basic knowledge of technology, communication and quality in the workplace. From an economic, educational and workforce development perspective, AUTO-MATION 2002 programmatically answers the question: "What do employers want new (and current) employees to know?" AUTO-MATION 2002 incorporates all of these aspects in its career foundations curriculum.

AUTO-MATION 2002 adapts easily to the diversity of today's jobseeker. Its design is applicable to all manufacturing sectors regardless of their size or product and is replicable in all learning environments, from rural and urban settings, to large or small class sizes.

AUTO-MATION 2002 has produced a wide array of outstanding accomplishments and successes. One hundred twenty-three participants were involved in the AUTO-MATION 2002 pilot, of which a total of 81 completed the entire 200 hours of instruction. Of the 42 participants that did not complete the 200 hours of instruction, more than half left to enter full-time employment.

All 81 participants who completed the course are eligible to receive six cost-free college credit hours from a local university; this added value opportunity is unprecedented in the Thumb Region. Additionally, the "creators" of AUTO-MATION will be presenting the pilot program at the Michigan Works! Association Annual Conference in September, 2002; and, AUTO-MATION 2002 also will be recognized with a state-level Excellence In Customer Service Award at the conference.

Changing times necessitate continuous new approaches to workforce development. New approaches, however, do not change the importance of embracing a solid career foundation. AUTO-MATION 2002 is a return to the basics for the 21st century.

For more information, contact Marvin Pichla, Executive Director, Thumb Area Michigan Works!, 3270 Wilson Street, Marlette, Michigan, 48453, (989) 635-3561, pichlam@thumbworks.org.

Missouri Business Representative Network

Missouri's Division of Workforce Development recognizes that "employer" is a role that businesses play only some of the time, and they should be helped with needs beyond employment and training demands. To help make employers the number one customer, the Division has established a network of staff whose sole purpose is to assist companies with all of their business needs — in addition to employment and training requirements.

Known as Business Representatives, these employees interact with industry, employer, and business organizations. Division staff meet individually with Missouri businesses to ensure they are completely satisfied with employment and training programs and services. Business Representatives also facilitate access to other government programs designed to help solve business problems, such as expansion or other economic development needs.

The basic services provided by Missouri's twelve Business Representatives include leading and directing regional Missouri Career Center business marketing systems to better coordinate a streamlined business contact network among partner agencies in each Workforce Investment Act region. Business Representatives are responsible for establishing and maintaining a business customer service system that includes implementing activities and making improvement recommendations to services and processes received from local career centers throughout the state.

Business Representatives spend approximately 70 percent of their work schedule with businesses, employers and/or business organizations to promote services offered through local career centers and other government agencies. Business Representatives function as problem solvers for businesses and strive to establish themselves as a single point of contact for individual businesses. Employees in this role help develop a "can do" reputation for themselves and for staff at the career centers. Business Representatives advise businesses of services available through Missouri's Department of Economic Development, Division of Workforce Development, Missouri Career Centers and other relevant agencies and resources.

For more information, contact Rick Beasley, Director, Missouri Division of Workforce Development, 421 East Duklin, P.O. Box 1087, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102-1087, (573) 751-3349, rbeasley@co.wfd.state.mo.us.

Nebraska

Nebraska's Worker Training Program (NWTP)

Nebraska's Worker Training Program (NWTP) was created to support Nebraska businesses in their effort to train, retrain, or upgrade the skills of their existing workers. Companies choose the area of training, the trainer, and the timeframe for training that will best benefit the firm and its employees. Program guidelines ensure that small companies (those employing less than 100 people) and large companies have an equal amount of funding available each quarter. Guidelines also provide for an equitable distribution of funds statewide by dividing the state into seven regions and setting aside a percentage of funding for each region equivalent to that region's population.

In the past year \$2,209,460 was awarded. A total of 638 Nebraska businesses and 17,431 employees directly benefited from these training grants which served to broaden and strengthen the skill base of employees and supported productivity gains for employers.

Any government program that distributes money is likely to be viewed favorably. What distinguishes the NWTP is its simple, business-friendly process and resourceful funding technique. The program's grant application and closeout forms are both one page in length. This simplified process allows any business – regardless of size and experience – to write and administer a grant. Funding is provided from interest generated by the State Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund. The legislature created this dual-purpose fund in the state treasury to hold 20 percent of Unemployment Insurance quarterly tax payments. The principal is held in trust for the sole and exclusive use of payment of unemployment insurance benefits. The interest this fund generates goes into the Nebraska Training and Support Trust Fund (NTST). The NTST money is then distributed by the Worker Training Program directly to companies in the form of training grants.

For more information, contact: Curt Beck, Marketing/Communications Administrator, Nebraska Workforce Development, Department of Labor, 550 South 16th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68509, (402) 471-9791, cbeck@dol.state.ne.us.

New Jersey

Workforce Literacy Pilot

The New Jersey Workforce Literacy Pilot project is intended to increase the math, reading, communication and computer skills of participants utilizing a combination of contextual, self-paced, computer-based software and video material in a structured and facilitated environment. Participants are referred to the pilot by case managers, counselors, interviewers or are self-referred. Prior assessment scores are reviewed with the potential participant, and their past skills and experiences are also considered in an interview setting while the "Workshop Supervisor" and the participant determine the participant's goals.

While the goal is always employment, sometimes skills need to be improved before employment can be attained. Once the goal is determined, the participant is assigned specific lessons to meet his/her goals. The participant is also informed that the workshop is a work environment and they are expected to behave as employees, i.e. arrive on time, be prepared to work, provide notification of absences etc. Participants are shown how to use the Internet for conducting job searches, posting resumes into America's Talent Bank, interviewing and follow-up.

A significant number of participants have improved their reading and math skill levels by three full grade levels after a few weeks in the program. This has been determined by retesting participants after five weeks in the program (most participants complete the program within six weeks). Most participants that complete the program are energized as they have accomplished goals they did not think possible, including receiving their GEDs or moving on to college level programs.

Many of these participants have been videotaped and they encourage other participants through "JobCasts" programming. "JobCasts" are 5-7 minute video programs that are streamed to workshops via the Internet or digital broadcasting. "JobCasts" were developed by the New Jersey Network (New Jersey's Public TV station) for the Workforce Literacy Program.

This pilot has demonstrated in a measurable way how different departments of state government (Labor, Corrections and Human Services) can come together to provide their customers with skills they need to change their lives for the better. It is also helping the employer community by providing workers with basic skills. This program was conceived during a period of unprecedented low unemployment during which most of the work ready labor pool had been exhausted. It brought hope to those on public assistance and those with barriers to employment.

For more information, contact Janice E. Pointer, Director Employment and Training, New Jersey Department of Labor, P.O. Box 055, John Fitch Plaza, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0055, (609) 292-5834, jpointer@dol.state.nj.us.

Oklahoma

Oklahoma City – Online, Real-Time

In a time of rapid change in workforce demographics, an increasing need for skilled workers and a booming economy, Oklahoma City area employers, economic developers, educators and workforce specialists expressed a need for real-time labor market information. Since project developers identified up to nine separate groups as primary users, it was critical that this information be readily accessible to all. The goal was to develop a real-time information system that would enable a more flexible job market, faster job placement, quicker adaptation of training programs to employer requirements, higher wage rates and sustained economic growth.

The primary objectives were to conduct a survey of a representative sample of Oklahoma City employers to learn about employment structure, wage levels and changes, job vacancies and training needs in a four county area, and to develop, implement and maintain a web site containing the results of this survey. In addition, the survey itself was to be a mechanism for relationship-building with private sector businesses and government agencies, in support of a continuous sampling framework for providing real-time labor market information.

As a result, employers, jobseekers, education providers and others have immediate access to real-time information, via a web site (<http://www.workokc.org>). Information includes:

- Salaries and benefits by occupation;
- Supply and demand of occupations by industry;
- Growth and decline of occupations by industry;
- Potential layoffs by occupations and industry;
- Turnover rates, unionization, seasonal occupations and special circumstances;
- Hiring trends and methods by occupation;
- Current emerging and declining occupations;
- Skill requirements by occupation and industry;
- Employer satisfaction with the skills of new hires from local training programs; and

- Training and educational resources for employers and jobseekers.

Because of the information provided by the survey and web site, city planners, businesses and educators have been able to identify “gaps” more closely allowing for the development of new initiatives specifically targeted to close those gaps. For example, the “working poor” have been targeted and monies identified to provide training opportunities that will enable them to fill some of the hard-to-fill positions troubling employers. This in turn builds Oklahoma City’s economic base and improves lives.

In addition, employers and educators are more aware of workforce services, and are talking with each other more than ever before about what is needed to make Oklahoma City prosper.

For more information, contact Richard Brown, Programs Manager, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, 2401 North Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73152, (405) 557-7197, Richard.brown@oesc.state.ok.us.

Pennsylvania

South Central Regional Working Group on Health Care Employment and Training

As a result of strategic planning during 2000, three Workforce Investment Boards in south central Pennsylvania – Berks, Lancaster, and South Central – identified the health care industry cluster as a high priority for workforce investment because of the dramatic shortages of skilled workers in nearly every occupation as well as the track record of the industry in growing family-sustaining jobs. The Lancaster County Board provided further industry analysis of the health care community as a part of its Community Audit Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor.

In early 2001, the three boards collaborated together and applied for an Incumbent Worker Challenge Grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry to address the worker shortage through an intensive, sustained television-based recruitment campaign targeted to underemployed, incumbent workers from 18-40 years of age. The campaign used \$100,000 of grant money to develop the media messages; the health care industry eventually contributed \$550,000 to pay for the air time. Over 1,200 messages were aired during the campaign from October 2001 through June 2002.

Each message encouraged the viewer to call a toll-free number for more information which allowed people to choose one of ten CareerLinks (One-Stop centers) where they could receive an orientation to health careers. Most CareerLinks involved in the project offered a briefing onsite for the interested person on health care employment and/or training related to preparation for employment. Some CareerLinks offered an additional health careers orientation with more career information, shadowing, and testing for placement.

With the help of a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, the Lancaster Board developed a Foundational Skills for Health Care Workers (literacy) program and a Pre-Allied Health Training Program to prepare non-traditional students (dislocated workers, underemployed, incumbent workers, welfare-related) for entry into health career ladders. The Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 (the Title 2 provider) funds the training for the Foundational Skills program on an on-going basis. Also, the Regional Working Group received the first Critical Job Training Grant from Pennsylvania’s state government for \$600,000 to train new and incumbent workers in eight hospitals in the region.

All totaled, the project generated over \$1,800,000 in public and private sector investment beyond local Workforce Investment Act funding that filled in some areas not covered by the grants. Roughly \$750,000 of that amount is from the health care community (public and private).

To date, the project has generated hundreds of calls to CareerLinks, filled all of the nursing and allied health training programs in the ten county area to capacity through early 2003, placed over 50 non-traditional students into the workforce or in training for health careers and, in general, raised the level of awareness of the communities involved to the nature and scope of the health care workforce shortage.

For more information, contact Timothy Bittle, Deputy Secretary for Workforce Development, Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, 7th and Forster Streets, Room 1719B, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120, (717) 705-2630, tbittle@state.pa.us.

South Carolina Aiken One-Stop

The Aiken One-Stop Career Center is South Carolina's new online employment and training information site. This state-of-the-art facility, a modern One-Stop resource center with an available bank of 30 personal computers for direct customer use has revolutionized the way business is done by providing the customer immediate service.

To develop the ideal center, comments and suggestions were solicited from customers. Staff were then cross-trained to assist in all areas of specialized services. To further expand their commitment to the area, staff members were encouraged to join community organizations such as Kiwanis, Toastmasters and the Chamber of Commerce.

The One-Stop employees now participate in career days, job fairs, as well as job shadowing and speaking at community meetings. Tours of the One-Stop are conducted for community groups, schools, agencies, and staff from other One-Stop areas.

The career center also helps customers find jobs and plan careers. There are five "help desks" located throughout the One-Stop which are fully staffed and equipped to provide services. There are additional "subject matter" experts on staff who provide detailed information about specialized services. The computerized stations are supplemented with all paperwork necessary for individuals to be referred on a job or file a claim for unemployment insurance. There is also a library of community services representing all participating partners and each human service agency in the Aiken area.

People who are out of work can do much more than "sign-up" and "line up" at what was called the "unemployment office" in Aiken. Previously, the operation in Aiken was a "staff-driven system." Today, as a "customer driven system," individuals receive assistance from any number of cross-trained, friendly staff. If a customer does not know how to get a job, the center offers workshops and materials. If a customer is having problems providing for his family while looking for work, there is staff on-site that can assist with immediate human service referrals. This new method of service eliminated the rows of chairs occupied by customers sitting and waiting for long periods of time for specialized staff who could only provide limited service.

Aiken is the first Employment Security Commission Office and full service comprehensive One-Stop in South Carolina to convert to this new system. It has been called the "prototype office" for South Carolina, and the term "Aikenized" has been coined by other offices and partners alike who wish to model the Aiken One-Stop Career Center. Nearly all of the South Carolina Employment Security Commission's Area Directors, as well as the state's Local Workforce Investment Directors and One-Stop operators have visited and toured Aiken's operation for information, guidance, and/or direction. There has also been communication from other states requesting information on this "Customer Driven System."

The old "have a seat and wait" philosophy has been eliminated and replaced by, "How may I help you?" The facility's changes and added resources have created a "self-service" atmosphere for customers which allow more opportunities for staff to assist customers that need assistance.

For more information, contact James Mac Horton, Director, Employment and Training Technical Services, South Carolina Employment Security Commission, P.O. Box 1406, Columbia, South Carolina 29202, (803) 737-2588, Jhorton@sces.org.

South Dakota Skills Development Center

The Skills Development Center (SDC) was established by the South Dakota Department of Labor in response to a proposal submitted by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program staff at the Rapid City One-Stop Career Center. In one centralized location the Skills Development Center assists welfare recipients in an individualized capacity to overcome employment barriers. In addition, it provides basic skills training, intensive pre-employment training, individualized counseling on personal and work matters, teaches life enhancement and marketable work skills, and provides career planning, and job search assistance. The objective is to improve the clients' work and life outlook while reducing their dependency on welfare assistance. In turn, the program provides employers with qualified applicants, improves coordination with the employment specialists handling the cases, and imparts valuable services to the community.

Since its inception in August 2000, the SDC has served 930 TANF clients; original estimates were set at just 100 clients per year. The SDC serves all TANF applicants and recipients. The SDC staff adjusts each client's plan toward self-sufficiency based on what the client and the Employment Specialist have identified as needs. One hundred percent of the individuals who apply for TANF and are able to participate in work activities in some capacity are referred to the SDC. Those with limitations or restrictions are also accommodated. TANF clients begin participating at the SDC the day they apply for TANF (versus only 40 percent before the SDC) and 81 percent of clients continue to show for their second and subsequent days (compared to only 20 percent previously). The level and type of participation is based on program requirements and input from each client and their employment specialist. Rather than sending clients out to various sites to complete their required community work, projects are brought to the SDC by various community organizations. Clients receive job coaching and skills training while completing the projects. This has resulted in a more than 230 percent increase in the number of people participating in this activity.

Area organizations and employers come to the SDC weekly to provide additional information to the clients about services and resources. Employers also provide first-hand information and training on work performance standards, skills they look for in prospective employees, information about their business, and employment opportunities. Employers are now calling the SDC before they advertise job openings, and TANF clients, employers, and employment specialists now have one location which fulfills their needs. With the TANF staff, resources, work site, and clients all in one centralized location, a more effective way of dispersing services to clients, employment specialists, area non-profit organizations, employers and the community has been developed.

Because of the SDC, the employment specialists' contact with their TANF clients has greatly improved. Contact was previously limited to occasional monitoring and scheduled appointments. Now clients are able to interact with their employment specialists in a different environment than that of the One-Stop Career Center. In addition, the SDC staff spends 20 to 40 hours per week with each individual client; more hours than ever before. The SDC has taken intensive individualized service to a new level. Through this team effort, the SDC is able to meet the needs of the client, TANF staff, community organizations and area employers.

For more information, contact Marcia Hultman, Public Information Officer, Skills Development Center, South Dakota Department of Labor, 700 Governors Drive, Pierre, South Dakota 57501-2277, (605) 773-5941, Marcia.hultman@state.sd.us.

Texas

Connecting Employers and Job Seekers in the Texas Workforce Network

Connecting Employers and Job Seekers in the Texas Workforce Network is a two-phased training curriculum designed to assist workforce development professionals in their efforts to connect employers and jobseekers. The statewide training initiative provides an overview of the new Texas Workforce system as supported by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, including an examination of the roles and responsibilities of the various entities within the network, methods for ensuring quality customer service, integrated service strategies and an exploration of the many varied tools and resources available to assist workforce development professionals in facilitating the connection between employers and jobseekers.

The training was developed in partnership by the Training and Development Department and the Workforce Development Division of the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). It was designed to address several issues that arose from: 1) state and federal legislation requiring a seamless service delivery approach to administering employment and training programs; 2) a heightened emphasis on the employer as the primary customer; 3) customer service complaints at the local service delivery level; 4) multiple reporting databases requiring staff to perform "dual data entry;" 5) resistance or inability to deliver integrated or seamless services; 6) lack of staff knowledge of the programs and services available within the Workforce Network; and, 7) lack of information about resources available to workforce development staff to assist them in performing their duties.

Classroom evaluations conducted immediately after the classes have been overwhelmingly positive. Written comments included statements the relevancy of the training and how it will help managers do a better job of supporting their staff and ensuring integration and quality customer service. Many also stated how much they learned about the programs, services and resources available within the system; and many vowed to do a better job of serving area employers.

There was a 39 percent point increase from pre to post test scores statewide. Evaluation scores ranged from 4.5 to 4.8 on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) in all five evaluation categories. The average training impact at 30+ day follow-up was 40 percent — well above the standard set by the American Society of Training and Development. The first phase of the training was so well received that local workforce boards have estimated that over 1,000 participants will require the second phase of the training. The full potential target audience could reach over 5,000 participants.

For more information, contact Louis LeDoux, Training Supervisor, Texas Workforce Commission, 101 East 15th Street, Room 230, Austin, Texas 78778-0001, (512) 936-3146, Louis.LeDoux@twc.state.tx.us. (This award was also submitted for the Pyramid Prize, Compass Award and World Class Workforce Award.)

Utah

Tax Audit Program (TAP)

Utah's Tax Audit Program (TAP) provides a streamlined, paperless Unemployment Insurance (UI) tax audit process at the employer's worksite anywhere in the state. Utah's TAP system is an innovative approach to UI tax auditing with proven success in the field. The system was designed for use by any UI tax, internal revenue, entitlement or compensation program.

TAP is also capable of operating as a stand-alone system. Using only about 18 inches of counter space, the system accesses tax records from the state mainframe; electronically compares employer tax records; constructs and prints an audit report for the employer; and transmits scanned employer documents and signatures to the LAN/mainframe. Paper handling and document mailing are eliminated, saving time and frustration for all involved.

Current audit technology in the unemployment insurance community ranges from strictly paper and pencil to limited laptop technology. Utah's TAP system is the first genuinely paperless system with both download and upload capabilities to and from the state's central LAN/Mainframe systems.

TAP improves customer service to employers by providing faster audits with immediate, precise results and improves customer service for claimants whose UI benefits depend upon timely audit results. The department benefits from improved process efficiency, fewer errors and misunderstandings, and the elimination of mail costs, loss or delay.

Due to the TAP system, the U.S. Department of Labor now ranks Utah 5th in the nation for percentage of employers audited, up from 30th in 1999.

For more information, contact Jackie Wurster, Field Auditor, Utah Department of Workforce Services, P.O. Box 70, St. George Utah 84780, (435) 688-3137, jwurste@ws.state.ut.us.

Building a World Class Workforce Nominations

Alaska

Using Continuous Improvement to Build World-Class Performance

Alaska's Employment Security Division used self-assessment to mobilize on a path of continuous improvement, beginning with the internationally acclaimed Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence and the Florida Sterling Navigator as a follow-up. This identified opportunities for improvement in leadership, strategic planning, customer and market focus, information and analysis, process management, human resource focus and business results.

The Baldrige assessment showed that to strengthen performance the division consider developing a strategic plan, improve communications, conduct a climate survey, and rework the employee evaluation policy. By organizing into work teams, the division involved all levels of staff (65 percent of the division's employees provided in-depth feedback for improvement) workforce partners and a sampling of end-users to pioneer a full-scale continuous improvement effort.

The division has completed 13 of the 15 improvement opportunities identified from the Baldrige assessment:

- all senior leaders are involved in goal deployment, addressing strategic objectives;
- all division supervisory and management employees received leadership training;
- the senior management team communicates organizational priorities, strategic direction, values and key performance expectations via weekly and monthly electronic updates;
- all employees are evaluated using a new performance appraisal, including self and leadership assessments, aligned with continuous improvement goals and performance measures;
- division employees are encouraged to share innovative ideas and recommend improvements via an electronic feedback system;
- employees are recognized for their special contributions that result in improved processes through a unique awards program, nominated and evaluated by peers; and,

- the division principles, driven by quality customer service, excellence through leadership, commitment to employees and performance driven, combined with the vision, values and motto, "Customer Value Every Time," establish how the agency conducts business and guides the behaviors expected of every employee.

Of 40 states that have quality improvement initiatives, Alaska is distinctive in submitting to a self-assessment using the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence. The process converted the division from a reactive to a proactive organization, maximizing employee capacity. As one employee put it, "I applaud management efforts to pursue a culture of constant improvement through Baldrige. In a few years, we should find ourselves reacting less and leading more. I, for one, feel more empowered to lead."

For more information, contact Ronald Hull, Director, Employment Security Division, 1111 West 8th Street, Suite #210, Juneau, Alaska 99801, (907) 465-2712, ron_hull@labor.state.ak.us.

Connecticut Capacity Building/Training Institute

The Capacity Building Project (CBP) represents only one of the numerous initiatives sponsored by the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC) and the Office for Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) to meet the complementary needs of two sets of customers: employers seeking qualified employees, and workers and jobseekers pursuing career opportunities leading to economic security.

Connecticut has always realized that one of the greatest strengths of its workforce development system is the dedicated workforce development professionals throughout the state. To transform the CTWorks One-Stop system to a locally-driven system responsive to the demands of both external and internal customers, Connecticut determined that it needed to invest in its frontline staff by developing a life-long learning institute to support their education and development.

Connecticut's CBP has established the foundation for its life-long learning institute, the Training Institute for workforce development professionals. The effort is a collaboration between partner agencies and local workforce investment boards sponsored and is funded by the CETC and OWC.

The guiding principles of the project are collaboration, customer focus, customer choice and accountability. The success of the project is due in large part to its focus on customers in designing the courses along with a high degree of collaboration and cooperation of the partners as members of the Capacity Building Advisory Board.

The Training Institute filled 534 seats in the seven workshops it offered during its first session with participation from all sectors of the workforce development community. Participants were very satisfied with the overall training with an aggregate mean score of 4.49 out of 5 for satisfaction with the classes indicating the training was relevant and useful to their job performance. Participants rated usefulness with an aggregate mean score of 4.41 out of 5. With an aggregate mean score of 4.17 out of 5, participants indicated that what they learned would improve their job performance.

Although the increase in skills for workforce development professionals was important, more so was the cultural change that occurred as a result. The project began by focusing on individual needs and those of individual agency or local workforce areas. As the project progressed, success was defined in terms of the success of the workforce development system in Connecticut and the needs of its customers rather than by individual needs. CBP and the institute it established are models of collaboration for other projects and initiatives.

For more information, contact Janice Schuyler, Director of Staff Development, Office for Workforce Competitiveness and Connecticut Department of Labor, 2000 Folly Brook Boulevard, Wethersfield, Connecticut 06109, (860) 263-6671, janice.schuyler@po.state.ct.us.

Oklahoma

Workforce Development Quality Leader Certificate Program

The passage and implementation of the Workforce Investment Act and the creation of the One-Stop System/Center required Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) and/or Workforce Development Councils (WDCs) to move from the role of program management towards community workforce development leadership. No longer is it the Boards' responsibility to just manage the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs. Now the Boards' role is to provide leadership on how WIA program funds can augment and fill gaps throughout all the workforce development resources within the community. In addition, it is also no longer the role of WIBs/WDCs to manage the One-Stop Center—but to provide leadership and guidance to the One-Stop Operator regarding its role in addressing larger community workforce development issues.

Oklahoma staff and board members believed they were not prepared for these new roles and needed a means to learn the new skills required to develop, lead and manage the continuously improving centers and integrated local system. Therefore, at the request of local partner agencies/ service providers and WIBs/WDCs, the state officials and the State Workforce Investment Board, the University of Oklahoma's College of Continuing Education's Workforce Oklahoma Training Institute developed the Workforce Development Quality Leader Certificate Program.

This comprehensive, creative and motivating six-day training series (offered as three, two-day training sessions within a three month timeline) provides partner agency, service provider and center staff, and local board members and staff the necessary foundation in Baldrige, as well as the complete framework for leadership in the local workforce centers. Homework from each session ensures each attendee learns and practices the skills required of a successful leader within all roles of this new system. Certificates are only issued to those who have completed all of the required training sessions, and associated homework.

To date, 38 staff members, representing 21 centers and three partner agencies have received their certificates. Eleven more, representing eight centers and three partner agencies are in various stages of completion. Seventeen additional staff and board members are waiting for the next series to begin.

For more information, contact Edward Gregorio, Director, Workforce Oklahoma Training Institute, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, 555 East Constitution Street, Room 217, Norman, Oklahoma 73072, (405) 325-1443, egregorio@ou.edu.

Pennsylvania

Employer Relations - Organized Selling Seminar

The Pennsylvania Bureau of Employer and Career Services, Employer Relations Unit, developed and introduced an innovative, dynamic training course at the request of local workforce development staff and administrators. Titled, "Employer Relations – Organized Selling Seminar," the one-day course builds the capacity of One-Stop staff to engage employer customers, gain their cooperation, and satisfy their workforce needs.

Local staff and administrators realize the critical importance of the employer community to the success of the new One-Stop service centers and in response, staff from many different partner agencies began organizing employer relation teams to coordinate service to their local employer

community. One-Stop agencies had previously made their own individual contacts with the same employers and the problem was how to deliver the message to the business community that the One-Stops now offered the combined services of many partners. At the same time, as employer relations staff from various partners merged their divergent messages and styles into a One-Stop team, it was essential that employers heard the One-Stop message from a consistent voice. Staff development training was needed on how to introduce the new One-Stop services to employers and a new "seminar" training course was developed to meet this need.

Designed for One-Stop staff from any participating agency that is involved in contacting prospective employer customers, the seminar focuses on discovering and addressing the employer's workforce needs, promoting One-Stop services, and retaining the employer as a customer. The seminar is directed toward improving the "selling" skills of One-Stop representatives through an interactive presentation format that includes discussions, individual and team exercises and a "test." To further promote One-Stop quality control, each trainee receives a comprehensive 100-page manual, numerous handouts, a PowerPoint marketing presentation and a laminated marketing desk guide.

The seminar begins with a brief history and overview of marketing followed by discussions about selling and what a One-Stop representative has to sell. Next, business etiquette tips that help to create a good first impression, such as how to properly shake hands, make introductions, and dress for business, are presented. The featured subjects are planning a specific employer sales contact and how to make an action-getting sales presentation. The seminar concludes with a discussion on how to overcome objections and a team exercise on selling the use of the One-Stop automated job matching system to a prospective employer.

Employer relation teams from 48 of the One-Stop centers in Pennsylvania have received the seminar during the past six months. Participants from across the state and from different partner agencies have consistently rated the training as "excellent" in their training evaluations.

For more information, contact Timothy B. Bittle, Deputy Secretary for Workforce Development, Seventh & Forster Streets, Harrisburg, PA 17120, (717) 705-2360, tbittle@state.pa.us.

Washington

Limited English Proficiency Community Outreach

Washington's successful effort to improve outreach for unemployment insurance services to those with limited command of the English language has resulted in a more efficient use of public resources and increased use of services by a group that has often been difficult to reach – the state's non-English speaking population.

The effort lays out a relatively simple map for other organizations: have staff do significant research on the problem, encourage them to share what they learn, reach out to new partners within the non-English speaking community, and use customer input to improve the effectiveness of existing outreach tools and technology. Washington has found this to be fruitful: it has reduced the cost of providing services while at the same time increased the amount of actual service provided; a remarkable conclusion to an effort primarily begun to address equal access and budget issues.

Employment Security shifted to TeleCenters in the delivery of unemployment insurance (UI) benefit claim services in 1999. The department developed a marketing plan aimed at informing customers about this change. Every facet of internal agency business, including staffing needs were reviewed. Based on projection data, there was a clear need to establish bilingual positions to accept and process claims. The agency also contracted with AT&T Language Line services for additional translation services.

When all TeleCenters were up and running, the department quickly found that staffing levels and language line services, particularly for Spanish speakers who comprised 7.5 percent of the state's population, were not enough. It became clear the outreach plan was primarily geared toward English-speaking customers. Feedback from the Spanish-speaking customers who were still going to WorkSource offices to apply for benefits indicated that technology and lack of information were major obstacles and repeat informational calls were swamping the system. Bilingual staff actively involved in their respective communities saw the need to educate their customers. The department saw demand for language line services far exceed expectations and budgeted costs, and the effort was still not reaching some of the population at all.

In May 2000, the department began surveying English and Spanish-speaking customers in an effort to enhance and improve services. The department began an aggressive outreach campaign into the Spanish speaking community. The outreach heavily involved the Spanish media, community-based organization contractors, and partnered with churches to assist with literature distribution. It included community workshops for potential partners regarding ESD services and a new Spanish language Internet claims process. Drawing staff and partners into the effort educated them as well and created new champions.

The goal was to educate potential non-English speaking customers about the UI program and enhance universal access for them. Since the effort began, unemployment claims among Spanish-speakers have risen nearly twice as fast as for English speakers, costs for expensive private translation services have fallen dramatically and customer satisfaction rates have been at the top of the chart. This effort should be a model set of practices for all organizations, but particularly for the many states having moved to call center operations.

For more information, contact Evelyn Rodriguez, Human Resources Administrator, Washington Employment Security Department, P.O. Box 9046, Olympia, Washington 98507-9046, (360) 902-9534.

Wisconsin

Employer/Business Services Staff Training

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) designed an Employer Services Skill Building/Professional Development program to assist employer services field staff and One-Stop job center partners. The project was multi-faceted and included nine focus groups that identified the needs, a large workgroup that clarified the needs, and sub-committees that refined the finished products over many meetings.

Based upon feedback from 90 percent of the Wisconsin One-Stops, the workgroup designed a final project which included curriculum development, training and future service delivery enhancements. The goal of the planning group was to keep the focus on the top priorities identified in the focus groups. These included consistent statewide training in three key areas: marketing/promoting One-Stop services, team-building/partnership development, and employer/business services (i.e. understanding and working with employers and business).

The workgroup reviewed several curricula then combined, modified and augmented to create the final products. Results were comprehensive consistent training programs presented in several locations across the state. A mini-pilot conducted at the Governor's Employment and Training Conference generated very positive responses and confirmed the need to provide these additional training programs. The project was implemented in various locations around Wisconsin with 520 participants to date. Participants rated the training programs as follows: 95 percent scored very good/excellent overall and 98 percent indicated they would highly recommend the training programs to others.

For more information, contact Gary Denis, Director, Bureau of Workforce Services, Wisconsin Department of Development, 201 East Washington Avenue, G100, P.O. Box 7972, Madison, Wisconsin 53707, (608) 266-6886, denisga@dwd.state.wi.us.

Compass Award Nominations

Kansas

Tax, Appeals, Benefits Self-Service System

The Tax, Appeals and Benefits Self-Service System (TABS) is a project that the Kansas Department of Human Resources (KDHR) initiated to improve, reengineer, redesign and restructure their entire unemployment insurance (UI) infrastructure, turning it from a low capacity patchwork of separate pieces offering basic services, to a high capacity integrated system that improved customer access and the agency's ability to better serve its claimant and employer customers.

Since its implementation, TABS has offered: online claims filing; seamless movement from online claims filing to job search; the ability to route calls between call centers; self-service voice recognition for claimants; shared data for the KDHR call center; Tax, Benefits; and/or Appeals staff; and, employer filing notice of protest, account change and Quarterly Wage Reports online.

The TABS program allowed KDHR to double its productivity with the same number of staff while radically improving customer service through greater speed, access and reliability. Processing time for unemployment compensation claims has dropped by more than 75 percent. The effectiveness of the program can also be measured by Minutes Per Unit. The average number of minutes required to process a claim has been reduced from a high of 47 minutes in FY 1999 to an all-time low of 11 minutes in December 2001; and has remained there — a 76 percent reduction. This is a direct result of changing the service delivery model to take unemployment claims via self-service and improving call center operations.

For these accomplishments and more, TABS has been awarded a Trailblazer Award by E-Gov 2002 and also won the Digital Government Award for the best State Government Innovation at E-Gov 2002.

The beneficiaries of the new system are 100 staff in the Kansas call centers, 110 state staff in Assessments and Collections, 10 staff in Appeals, 40,000 unemployment claimants, 12,000 employers using the system, and each employer paying UI taxes in Kansas. Additional beneficiaries will soon include other members of the America's Job Link Alliance when KDHR shares its development and lessons learned with the other members of the Alliance.

For more information, contact William Sanders, Chief Information Officer/Director of Employment Security, Kansas Department of Human Resources, 1309 SW Topeka Boulevard, Topeka, Kansas 66603, (913) 785-5075, wnsanders@hr.state.ks.us.

Missouri

Internet Online Claims Filing System

Prior to the introduction of the Internet Online Claims Filing System in December 2000, the Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DOLIR), Division of Employment Security (DES), implemented a customer service system that utilizes Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and a customer service representative. This system allows unemployed workers to file an unemployment insurance claim by calling a regional claims center (RCC) toll free. While filing a claim for unemployment

insurance benefits by telephone is convenient, claimants generally file only during the regional claims centers' business hours and have no options to look for employment.

The Internet Online Claims Filing System allows claimants to file a new, renewed, or reopened claim anytime from their homes, Missouri Career Centers, public libraries, or any location having personal computers with Internet access. Once the claim information is entered, the claimant receives immediate confirmation that their claim has been received. The system then connects the claimant to Missouri WORKS!, the state's online employment service where they can search for employment in their geographical area or statewide. The system's ability to assist claimants with reemployment is an added benefit not available through the regional claims centers. The Internet Online Claims Filing System is available 24-hours a day, seven days a week, with a few exceptions for maintenance.

Currently, the percentage of claims filed via the Internet is 6 percent of all claims. Since the first three months of calendar year 2001 through January 2002, the percentage of all claims filed via the Internet Online Claims Filing System has increased approximately 84.4 percent. To date the Internet Online Claims Filing System has saved Missouri more than \$15,400 in toll free costs and has redirected more than 2,500 staff hours toward providing faster responses and better customer service for all functions related to serving claimants.

The open architecture design of the Internet Online Claims System allows for the easy addition of other system functions and innovations. In May 2002, this system was further enhanced to allow claimants to file weekly (continued) claims online as well.

This system, which allows a claimant to file for benefits online with no staff intervention, is the first of its type in the nation. Seventeen other states have implemented a variation of an Internet claim system; however, these claims filing systems still require staff to either key or review data before the claim transaction is complete. Missouri is the only state that immediately interfaces the claimants' data with employer wage information. The direct data interface eliminates the "middle man" and the unemployment insurance claim is filed immediately.

The implementation of the Internet Online Claims Filing System incorporates current technology with government services, gives claimants another initial unemployment insurance claim filing option, and meets consumer demands for online accessibility of public services.

For more information, contact: Doug Kaylor, Chief of Unemployment Insurance, Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations/Division of Employment Security, 421 East Dunklin Street, Jefferson City, Missouri 65104, (573) 751-5196, dkaylor@dolir.state.mo.us.

Missouri Toolbox

Missouri Toolbox is an interactive, Internet based common intake and case management system created to collect and track information on customers of the Missouri Workforce Development System. Services are provided to jobseekers and employers by numerous partner agencies through a One-Stop career center system known as Missouri Career Centers. These numerous partner agencies providing workforce development related programs include, but are not limited to: the Workforce Investment Act, Wagner-Peyser Labor Exchange, Welfare-to-Work, Vocational Rehabilitation, Higher Education, Family Services, Vocational and Adult Education, and Elementary and Secondary Education.

Missouri Toolbox was designed to meet the data tracking and reporting requirements and integrate the needs of all the partners providing services in Missouri Career Centers. This common intake and

tracking system shares data, reducing duplication of services, improving customer service, and promoting a cost effective delivery of employment and training services.

Toolbox has realized many outstanding accomplishments. Missouri Career Center partners who formerly maintained separate, unconnected systems now have access to one universal system to track services provided to their customers. Customer data is now instantly available via the Internet to authorized personnel and common intake allows partners to share data, reducing duplicated efforts and wasted time for customers. Program eligibility can be readily determined and documented by utilizing shared data. Joint re-employment plan utilization also allows partner agencies to better coordinate services, dually enroll customers, and eliminate duplicated services.

With the use of Toolbox, a significant amount of state level monitoring of local programs can be done in real time via the Internet from a monitor's desk. Local management also has better access to specific office performance data to better manage for continuous improvement without the previous delay experienced in obtaining reports. Desktop monitoring significantly reduces travel costs compared to on-site state level monitoring visits.

Missouri Career Center staff now provide employers with a skilled workforce and jobseekers with access to jobs with increased earning potential, more efficiently and effectively. Common intake, client tracking, shared data, joint re-employment plans and reduced duplication make this system very efficient and cost effective in the delivery of Missouri's workforce development system services.

For more information, contact: Rick Beasley, Director, Missouri Division of Workforce Development, 421 East Dunklin Street, P.O. Box 1087, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102-1087, (573) 751-3349, rbeasley@co.wfd.state.mo.us.

Nebraska Workforce INFOdisc

The Nebraska Workforce Development – Department of Labor developed the Workforce INFOdisc to improve the method of communicating its services to the public. The Workforce INFOdisc is a compact disc that includes audio/visual sound bytes for the media to use on television and radio, and print media can use the sound bytes for quotes.

The goals of the Workforce INFOdisc were to present information to the media in a format that would generate greater publicity of the agency's services and initiatives and to show, through an innovative product, the ease with which customers can access agency information.

This idea had particular significance because of the economic downturn in Nebraska. There was a real need to find new ways to communicate important information, particularly after the events of 9-11. Commissioner Lecuona believed a CD would be just the right tool to achieve better communication with the public. The Commissioner took this idea to members of the Communications and Marketing Department who made the vision a reality.

They decided that the monthly CD would always include standard features such as the Commissioner's sound bytes, the unemployment rates release, a new feature called "Hot Jobs" and other labor market information. It would also include monthly news stories and news features from the Nebraska Workforce Development – Department of Labor.

The INFOdisc has already featured sound bytes from Governor Mike Johanns. In addition, monthly news features have covered such important programs as UICONNECT and Nebraska JobLink.

Additionally, news stories regarding Unemployment Insurance benefit payments have been a part of the disc.

By supplying the information through the Nebraska Workforce INFOdisc, the Nebraska Workforce Development – Department of Labor is successfully increasing the frequency of coverage in the news media.

For more information, contact Curt Beck, Marketing/Communication Administrator, Nebraska Workforce Development, Department of Labor, 550 South 16th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68509, (402) 471-3385, cbeck@dol.state.ne.us.

New Jersey Career Beacon Workshops

The Career Beacon Workshops are intended to increase the skills required to return to the labor market by offering a series of reemployment workshops consisting of an orientation, self-management skills, labor market information, effective job search, marketing/resume, interviewing, and training. Participants are informed of the Career Beacon Workshops while attending a reemployment orientation which is mandatory for all unemployment insurance (UI) recipients. The attendees are given a Job Readiness Inventory Quiz to identify their reemployment skill(s) deficiency and provided a brochure describing the workshops, along with a workshop schedule. The workshops are also part of the core services provided in the Workers Profiling and Reemployment Services Program where individuals selected for the Workers Profiling and Reemployment Services Program are mandated to attend a predetermined number of workshops.

In developing the Career Beacon Workshops, one of the main objectives was to ensure that the employer community and One-Stop career centers had an opportunity to contribute in the development of the workshops. The program was designed to bring a fresh approach to the workshops available in the One-Stops and to ensure that all customers had access to them.

A significant number of participants have benefited in upgrading their job search skills and returned to the labor market after attending the workshops. The process energizes participants and provides an environment that concentrates on returning to work. The Career Beacon Workshops will be offered statewide by September 2002.

For more information, contact JoAnn Hammill, Assistant Commissioner, Workforce New Jersey, New Jersey Department of Labor, P.O. Box 055, John Fitch Plaza, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0055, (609) 292-2000, jhammill@dol.state.nj.us.

Pennsylvania Regional Data Analysis Tool (RDAT)

Pennsylvania's Regional Data Analysis Tool (RDAT) was developed as a database application for use by the Commonwealth's Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs) to more easily conduct industry cluster analysis. The RDAT provides access to unsuppressed ES-202 data for each of the 67 counties in Pennsylvania by industry, and enables the development of industry clusters that include any or all levels of industry detail. The RDAT also allows the user to customize geographical areas which is critical in Pennsylvania where data for predefined areas such as Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) and Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIAs) is not sufficient for the LWIBs to meet their local and regional planning requirements.

Aside from the power to aggregate and view industries for any user-defined geography, the RDAT also provides statistical information on location quotients and shift/share analysis. Location quotients are a relative measure of the concentration of industry employment in a local area, compared to a larger geography such as a state or the nation. Shift/share analysis provides a further understanding of the growth or decline in industry employment by identifying the industry growth or decline caused by the overall economy, the industry's economy, and a residual that indicates a local competitive advantage. Location quotient and shift/share analysis are the statistical foundations of industry clusters and they have quickly become the primary method for understanding local industries and economies in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania's local workforce and economic development partners now have unprecedented access to local industry employment at their fingertips. While the core business of producing and disseminating labor market information has not changed, the presentation, accessibility and understanding of labor market information is changing to meet and exceed the growing needs of customers.

For more information, contact Mary Ann Regan, Director, Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, 220 Labor and Industry Building, 7th and Forster Streets, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17121-0001, (717) 787-3266, mregan@state.pa.us.

Utah

Contributions and Automated Tax System (CATS)

Utah's dramatic Y2K eve implementation of its Contributions Automated Tax System (CATS) marked the beginning of an exciting new era for government service. State-of-the-art technology now delivers astonishing customer service to employers and unequalled technological support for employees. This innovative system is the culmination of a four-year intensive effort to completely re-engineer workflow processes and programming used by the State of Utah to operate its unemployment tax program. While lack of Y2K compliance was the impetus for the project, planners saw a golden opportunity to do much more.

The new system replaced a system installed in 1978 that was modified countless times with minimal documentation; yet, conversion to the new system was virtually seamless to Utah employers and unemployment tax administrators. Every CATS process has successfully achieved or exceeded goals for improving service to internal and external customers. New computer programs and workflow processes now exist for: employer registration and account maintenance; collections and payment remittance; bankruptcy, employer refunds; delinquent reports; wage lists and reporting; and, tax and benefit accounting.

The CATS development group received the Governor's Information Technology Award for 2000. In presenting the award, Utah Governor Michael Leavitt said, "Utah government continues to be a leader in the use of technology. I am pleased to recognize this outstanding group for their work to make state government more efficient and effective for the citizens of this state." In addition, Don Avery, DWS Chief of Contributions was recognized as the DWS Manager of the Year for his efforts overseeing the project. He was also recognized as the State of Utah's Manager of the Year for his development and management of the system.

All across the country, State Workforce Agencies are initiating system modernizations to provide better service to their customers and lower operating costs. Utah's CATS group has accomplished this – on time and within budget. Several state representatives have visited Utah to get additional information about CATS from the developers, and more trips are planned.

This largely “exportable” system could make a real difference in other states still operating old legacy systems that are straining to keep up with workload or their customers’ contemporary expectations for performance. Utah is committed to the advancement of technology in the unemployment tax community and welcomes the attention and inquiries generated by CATS.

For more information, contact Don Avery, Chief of Contributions, Utah Department of Workforce Services, 140 East 300 South, Salt Lake City, Utah 84111, (801) 526-9622.

Prism Award Nominations

Alabama

Excellence in Serving Businesses

In October 1999, Alabama State Employment Service (ES) and Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT) formed a close working “business/government partnership” with Honda Manufacturing to staff the new Honda automobile plant to be built in Lincoln, Alabama. The Talladega ES Office empowered a team of local office staff to work with the partnership to provide professional, and timely staffing assistance for this business venture in Alabama, as well as to provide local and statewide job seeking customers the tools they needed to seek and retain employment with Honda.

Beginning in January 2000, the ES team processed 34,431 application requests for production and maintenance employment. Upon completion of the partnership processing, the Employment Service staff successfully placed 2,006 non-exempt production and maintenance staff with Honda Manufacturing.

In August 2000, Honda officials were so pleased with the success of the non-exempt hiring process that they asked the ES team to suggest a plan to implement the initial phases for the hiring process for exempt employees consisting of highly technical and managerial staff. In coordination with company human resources staff, the ES team established a resume and matching system in which over 30,000 exempt resumes were received and reviewed. Over 94 percent of the total 223 exempt staff hired by Honda were referred and placed by the Talladega ES staff! This astonishing and impressive accomplishment was attained in spite of stiff competition from headhunters and private employment agencies nationwide.

This highly successful project resulted in the timely staffing of well qualified workers for a large manufacturing plant in a small community in Alabama. The Honda project demonstrates that a very small and dedicated local Employment Service office staff with limited resources can meet and exceed the expectations of a very large prestigious business.

The economic impact felt throughout the State of Alabama when over 2,239 individuals locate gainful employment, cannot be overstated – especially in an area of 6.1 percent unemployment. The grand opening for Honda Manufacturing Alabama, LLC, was held on December 4, 2001. This has truly been a team effort between business and government – a “partnership” that continues to thrive through daily communication, trust, and hard work.

For more information, contact Steve Horton, ES Program Manager, Alabama State Employment Service, Department of Industrial Relations, 649 Monroe St., Montgomery, Alabama 36131, (334) 242-8003, shorton@dir.state.al.us.

Florida

Plastics Learning Consortium

The Florida Plastics Learning Consortium conducted the Florida Incumbent Worker Plastics Training Project between March 13 and July 27, 2001. This innovative project brought together a state workforce board, a national trade association, a state broadcasting network, a manufacturing extension research and training program, 33 Florida plastics manufacturing companies and nine educational institutions to train and certify 210 incumbent workers as plastics operators. In addition to the broad stakeholder involvement, the project was unique because it utilized federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) dollars to fund the industry-specific training and testing.

The consortium grew out of a strong linkage with Workforce Florida - the state workforce development board, Enterprise Florida - the state economic development organization, and the plastics industry sector – a targeted industry sector in Florida. Together, this group identified workforce development as a top priority for plastics companies – specifically skills upgrade training for incumbent workers, the barriers to skills upgrade training for incumbent plastics industry workers, and existing resources that could effectively address the training needs.

The consortium utilized the Plastics Learning Network™ to broadcast, via satellite, live interactive training courses in plastics processing machine operations. The distance-learning program is the product of an innovative partnership between SPI, South Carolina Educational TV (SCETV) and the Polymers Center of Excellence (PCE). The training prepared 230 Florida workers to take the National Certification in Plastics exam, the national standard for assessing plastics operations employees' skills and knowledge. National certifications were awarded to 210 workers. Workers were able to receive the training at a location convenient to their workplace or at the actual worksite via satellite.

The Florida Plastics Learning Consortium is an excellent example of how an innovative, collaborative training partnership can leverage multiple resources to effectively respond to employers' needs throughout a state, resulting in benefits for the incumbent worker, the employer, the local community, and the state.

For more information, contact Lucia Fishburne, Communications Director, Workforce Florida, Inc., 1974 Commonwealth Lane, Tallahassee, Florida 32303, (850) 921-1119, lfishburne@workforceflorida.com.

Massachusetts

CareerPoint

CareerPoint is a One-Stop career center serving the workforce and economic development needs of individual jobseekers and the business community throughout Hampden County and beyond. Chartered through the Regional Employment Board, CareerPoint specializes in exceptional customer service, innovative programming, creative problem solving, and an entrepreneurial "can do" attitude.

CareerPoint provides a broad range of services including: job fairs; outreach, recruitment, and screening of applicants; incumbent worker training; assessment services; job search workshops and seminars; computer classes; outplacement services, industry specific career ladder planning, a drop-in, high-tech resource library; and, individualized career counseling. CareerPoint's high energy, multicultural and professional staff are dedicated to providing the best possible customer service in Massachusetts and the nation.

CareerPoint has built a reputation among both jobseekers and employers for careful, attentive service above and beyond the norm. Statistics on customer satisfaction with CareerPoint consistently exceed

94 percent. Although CareerPoint has been in existence for only six years, they have already won two national awards, as well as a range of local awards and certificates of recognition. Built upon a strong foundation of input from its customer base, CareerPoint has emphasized flexibility and customization in both their business and job seeker services. CareerPoint's performance data reflects their commitment to excellence — they consistently exceed their goals in all important measurable categories.

CareerPoint paves the way for the rest of the Commonwealth in many significant areas. From incumbent worker training to outplacement assistance, CareerPoint demonstrates its willingness to take risks and try new services to benefit its customer base. CareerPoint leads the Commonwealth in supporting the business community to hire people with disabilities, as evidenced by the number of "Ticket to Work" vouchers issued and Massachusetts Commission for the Blind placements made. CareerPoint's accomplishments also reflect a departure from the norm in business services. CareerPoint stretches beyond the labor exchange function into a comprehensive approach to economic and workforce development that addresses retention issues in the form of incumbent worker training and career ladder development, relocation and outplacement issues, and other innovative services developed with the continuous input of their customer base.

For more information, contact Kim McLaughlin, Deputy Director of Workforce Development, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, One Ashburton Place, Room 2112, Boston, Massachusetts 02108, (617) 727-6573, kim.mclaughlin@dos.eol.state.ma.us.

Nebraska UI Connect

The Nebraska Workforce Development - Department of Labor wanted to provide a secure Internet site for Unemployment Insurance (UI) to ease the filing burden for customers, improve the accuracy and availability of data, and lower expenses. The resulting site, UIConnect, provides a full range of services to all customers regardless of the number of employees or location of their business headquarters.

UIConnect contains a main section known as the Filing Center. The Filing Center provides four filing options. First, an employer can file a combined tax report and wage detail report simultaneously while the application calculates the taxable wage and figures the taxes due. Second, the employer can file only their combined tax report by entering gross and excess wages and the application will still calculate the taxes due. The third option provides a convenient way to transfer only the wage detail report to the department. The final option provides a quick and easy way to report no payroll activity for the quarter.

The wage reporting section provides the customer with three options for reporting wage detail: they can use the site as a data entry form entering each item individually, they can download the detailed information from their previous report and simply enter the wage information, or they can transmit an electronic file in an approved format, which includes a spreadsheet.

In addition, the payment section provides two payment options. The customer can either pay amounts due electronically over the web via an automated clearing house (ACH) transaction, or print a payment voucher and mail a check to the department. The Filing Center also allows an employer to review any report previously filed, even though it may not have been filed on the web. The ability to amend returns will soon become a part of this site.

The Account Services section gives the customer an opportunity to make changes to their account. This may include either the discontinuance of the business, or any demographic changes such as

name, address, or phone number. In addition, any new business can apply for an account number online.

UIConnect also provides a Message Board for posting information essential to customers, such as any changes in legislation or upcoming events that may impact their organizations.

The Take a Tour feature, which is unique to UIConnect, gives employers the opportunity to take the tour prior to processing quarterly reports on the Internet. The step-by-step review of the process familiarizes customers with the system prior to using the application.

Only three quarters after full deployment, the convenience of UIConnect resulted in user acceptance that has exceeded expectations. The number of employers using this filing method increased 20 percent in the last quarter, and many employers with 1 to 12,000 employees use the spreadsheet option for electronically transmitting the wage detail report. Twenty-three percent of employers owing taxes chose the electronic payment option. Overall, 12 percent of businesses in the state are using UIConnect.

For more information, contact Curt Beck, Marketing/Communications Administrator, Nebraska Workforce Development, Department of Labor, 550 South 16th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68509, (402) 471-3385, cbeck@dol.state.ne.us.

New York E-Learning

The New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) acquired a substantial number of training slots to utilize e-Learning courses through NY Wired. The Department has made these slots available at no cost to the local workforce areas for use in their local One-Stop systems. This online training opportunity fosters critical thinking and enhances the business skill sets in participants. These slots were secured by the New York State Department of Labor with Workforce Investment Act (WIA) state-level funds and are available to local workforce investment areas as an intensive or training service for their incumbent worker populations.

Although the program was just instituted at the beginning of the calendar year, to date there are over 1,000 active users and an additional 400 users are slated to be registered. E-learning users have logged an impressive 351.25 training hours and more than 486 separate courses are being taken.

The e-learning pilot program is a result of coordinated efforts between the state department of labor, the state workforce investment board, local workforce investment areas, and the business community throughout the State of New York. E-learning supports local workforce investment boards by delivering training to local businesses to help meet their immediate and long-term needs. New York State has delivered a flexible method of training at no cost to businesses so their front line staff can get the skills they need to meet customer demands. E-learning is a prime example of how collaboration at different levels of government - state, regional, and local - can result in successfully addressing business needs.

For more information, contact Margaret Moree, Director, Workforce Development and Training Division, New York State Department of Labor, State Office Campus, Building 12, Room 450, Albany, New York 12240, (518) 457-0380, Margaret.Moree@labor.state.ny.us.

Oklahoma Simonton Project

In January 2000, the McAlester Economic Development Service, Inc. became aware of a potential expansion of a nationally known company from the home construction and improvement sector that was touring communities in eastern Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas for potential relocation sites. The business development team consisting of representatives from the McAlester Economic Development Service, Inc. (MEDS), the City of McAlester, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce and the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) began to immediately formulate a plan to encourage this company to locate in McAlester.

The key issues for this company were logistics and labor availability. The OESC, a partner in the Workforce Center, compiled the most recent labor force data in Pittsburg County as well as surrounding counties. OESC also conducted a mock job fair with public service announcements in an effort to establish that labor force availability was adequate to meet the employer needs. As a result, approximately 360 applications were received in the 10-day period, resulting in McAlester moving to the forefront of the selection process.

The company sent the President, CFO, and Vice President of Manufacturing to meet with community leaders and tour the community. The OESC made arrangements for the Corporate Director of Human Resources and a Human Resource Director to visit with local plant managers and CEO's to answer any questions they might have concerning the business climate in McAlester. These companies also validated the information that OESC had provided regarding availability of labor. The local workforce center has built a culture of company cooperation in the area and the visiting company was met with cooperation and enthusiasm.

Simonton Windows, one of the nations leading manufacturers of vinyl replacement and new construction windows, plans to open its sixth window manufacturing facility in McAlester, Oklahoma. The McAlester facility is scheduled to be built by late summer of 2002. The \$10 million facility will create 125 jobs in the first year, and in excess of 300 at full capacity.

The McAlester community was excited about the opening of this new facility. But in February 2002, Simmons Foods announced they would be closing their McAlester facility in April 2002 resulting in 420 displaced workers. It was apparent the majority of the production workers at Simmons Foods did not possess the necessary skills to obtain employment at Simonton Windows. A meeting was arranged with Simonton's Corporate Director of Training, the OESC, McAlester Adult Education and Literacy, WIA, Kiamichi Technology Center, and the Oklahoma Department of Commerce to determine how to train and prepare these transitional workers to meet the employment needs of Simonton. As a direct result, the Adult Education and Literacy partner sent staff to the Illinois plant to meet with Simonton plant officials and design training to enhance the skills of those individuals so they could meet the requirements of Simonton.

This successful effort to create new jobs in McAlester and Southeast Oklahoma would not have been possible without a "can do" attitude on the part of every partner.

For more information, contact Ann Pendergraft, Program Chief, McAlester Employment Service, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, 2401 North Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73152, (405) 557-5317, ann.pendergraft@oesc.state.ok.us.

Oregon

Workforce Analyst Project

Oregon's Workforce Analysts are 14 economists who specialize in working face-to-face with employers and other labor market decision-makers to solve problems by applying labor market information to specific customer questions. They select information from available data streams that is most relevant to the situation, and then educate the customer on how to best use that data to make a decision.

Basic services provided by the Oregon Labor Market Information System (OLMIS) include: helping employers and other groups access, analyze, and interpret data on the labor force, occupations, and the economy; researching and providing labor market trends, wage and other compensation information, and workforce strategies; assisting employers conducting research in these areas, frequently through the use of the Internet and other information technologies; and, developing special studies on economic, demographic, and labor trends affecting the local business climate to assist employers, employer associations, and community groups.

The outstanding accomplishments of the Oregon Labor Market Information System include: providing Labor Force Information and statistical data to the Oakridge Industrial Park manager and city officials for marketing the Industrial Park and surrounding area to potential employers looking to relocate or expand their business, and giving interviews to many TV, print & radio reporters to increase the awareness of labor market information in communities.

The Workforce Analyst Program is dedicated to providing services to business owners who do not have the time or skills to analyze the vast quantities of workforce information now available. The large number of thank you notes and repeat invitations to annual conferences demonstrates that the work done by the program is both appreciated and valued by the employer community. The activities accomplished in 2001 show that this customer driven approach allows for labor market information to be applied to informed decision making. The data no longer just sits on the employers' shelf.

For more information, contact Tom Fuller, Communications Manager, Oregon Employment Department, 875 Union St. NE, (503) 947-1301, thomas.e.fuller@state.or.us.

Pennsylvania

Workforce Development Week

"Workforce Development Week," June 3-7, 2002, was a surprisingly successful first effort to provide a statewide marketing showcase for Pennsylvania's One-Stop offices, called Team Pennsylvania CareerLink. Activities associated with Workforce Development Week in Pennsylvania provided job opportunities for job seeking customers across the state, educational opportunities for youth, retraining for displaced workers and skills assessment for those wanting to change jobs. Customers had an opportunity to introduce themselves to the technology-based CareerLink system leading to their empowerment to get the employment services they need to excel.

"Workforce Development Week" gave employer customers an opportunity to learn to navigate the workforce development systems self-service or staff-assisted components. Employers attended events and activities designed to interact with job seekers and service providers. Businesses were recognized for their efforts to drive the workforce development system in Pennsylvania. Businesses new to the system discovered that 48,000 employers post their jobs on CareerLink, that 268,000 jobseekers found employment via CareerLink, and that there are 336,000 resumes in the CareerLink system. They also learned how to access labor market information.

State and local elected officials became more familiar with the workforce development system and had an opportunity to interact with employer and applicant customers.

An estimated 10,000 customers and potential customers were directly involved in Workforce Development Week through many activities throughout the Commonwealth. Many thousands more received information on Pennsylvania's workforce development system through national cable news CNN, CNBC and the Wall Street Journal. Local television, radio and print media covering state and local legislators' proclamations and event coverage were extensive across the state.

Legislators became more aware of the services that the CareerLink provides to their constituents. Partnerships were forged to focus on the common goal of providing seamless workforce development services to Pennsylvania businesses.

Workforce Development Week increased customer market share dramatically. The partnerships created at all levels, both public and private, produced a synergy that Pennsylvania intends to build on with increasing effectiveness in the next Workforce Development Week.

For more information, contact Timothy Bittle, Deputy Secretary for Workforce Development, Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, Seventh & Foster Streets, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120, (717) 705-2360, tbittle@state.pa.us.

South Dakota

Central Dakota Medical Transcription Directed Study Program

A primary goal of the Central Dakota Medical Transcription Directed Independent Study Training Program is to provide employers with top quality employees. This project was initiated by two brothers working in a large health care system in Minneapolis. These men wanted to give something back to the rural area they grew up in, and through their work they recognized a growing need for qualified medical transcribers. Due to overhead costs of having transcribers located right in a facility combined with a growing need for additional transcribers nationwide, a program to train individuals to complete transcription work from their homes was viewed as a positive solution. It was clear that outsourcing medical transcription dictation would benefit employers while allowing those living in rural South Dakota to have meaningful employment without leaving their communities.

Today, the program successfully prepares individuals for a career as a medical transcriber without ever requiring them to leave home. Ultimately, trained transcribers are matched with employers so they can pursue their career from their homes.

The employment challenges facing rural South Dakotans are unique. As a state with a vast land mass and sparse population, employment opportunities and potential employees are not always located in the same area. Because of this, the benefits of the Medical Transcription program for both employers and employees can not be underestimated. The original intent of this project was to match individuals with high paying, home-based employment opportunities or careers without demanding relocation or commuting. Without home-based opportunities, many of these individuals in rural South Dakota and the surrounding states are faced with relocation or long commuting distances. The cost of transportation and the time consumed in the commute to work have made traditional employment unrealistic for some residents. The access and cost of daycare have also made traditional employment less attractive. For some, the Medical Transcriptionist Program provided the perfect solution.

This program perfectly matched the needs of a specific employer community with the needs of South Dakotans living in rural areas. This program has the potential to serve interested individuals living anywhere in the United States as they too can complete the educational component through distance

learning. In addition, with the technology available today, employers from literally any corner of the world can be linked to medical transcribers living in remote, rural areas.

For more information, contact Marcia Hultman, Public Information Officer, South Dakota Department of Labor, 700 Governors Drive, Pierre, South Dakota 57501, (605) 773-5941, marcia.hultman@state.sd.us.

Utah

Online UI Tax Services for Employers

Employers and tax preparers welcomed a unemployment insurance (UI) tax presence on the Internet when the Department of Workforce Services began providing tax information online in the 1990s. They also encouraged the Department to develop additional Internet capabilities.

On March 20, 1999, Utah Governor Michael Leavitt signed groundbreaking legislation requiring state government to provide access to information and application for government services by July 2002. Given this direction, Department of Workforce Services began work on a comprehensive Internet system for all employer tax functions. These functions included:

- Security System (Personal Identification Number, etc.);
- New Employer Registration;
- Employer Account/Tax Status Changes;
- Change of Ownership Notification;
- Employer Account Data (View Only);
- General Employer Account Data (Update);
- Request Benefit/Tax/Wage Reporting Forms;
- Tax and Wage Reporting Online;
- 940 Certifications for IRS Reporting;
- Leasing Company Account Maintenance;
- Service Company Account Maintenance; and
- Electronic Fund Transfer to Pay Taxes.

As design and development progressed, employers were invited to comment on screen appearance and functionality. Once the system was completed, a "soft" implementation occurred with about 1200 employers, who provided feedback to developers and tax staff. Public presentations to Certified Public Accountant and business owner organizations helped the formal "launch" of the system to all employers. All employers received a newsletter with step-by-step instructions to completing Internet activities. Help desk assistance provided additional personalized instruction upon request. The result was smooth implementation with enthusiastic acceptance by the 53,000 employers in Utah's business community.

Utah's Online UI Tax Services for Employers offers a comprehensive approach to Internet tax services. It has improved productivity for employers (and staff) by effectively answering many questions that used to require personal telephone responses. The system allows many customers to conduct all UI tax business themselves with no staff intervention. Employers are pleased with "their" system and continue to provide suggestions along with kudos. The system received the State 2002 CIO's Award from the Utah's Chief Information Officer and national recognition from the Center for Digital Government and Government Technology magazine.

The UI tax services system is effectively integrated with the State's "enterprise approach" to Internet systems containing all Utah government entities for business service, such as the Tax Commission, Commerce Division and Business Licensing, etc.

For more information, contact Don Avery, Chief of Contributions, Utah Department of Workforce Services, 140 East 300 South, Salt Lake City, Utah 84111, (801) 526-9622, davery@utah.gov.

Wisconsin

Transportation Assurance Program (TAP)

SHEA Services designed the Transportation Assurance Program (TAP) by assessing the needs of area employers who in previous contacts had expressed an interest in transportation initiatives. TAP provides emergency transportation to employees of participating companies. When an employee is faced with a transportation emergency/problem, SHEA Services (who has contracted with the Union Cab Company) provides a ride to and from work at no cost to the rider or the employer. This ride can include a stop to drop children off at daycare or school.

From January 2002 through May 2002, the TAP has provided 11 companies this service resulting in 344 free employee rides. Without this service these employees would have missed work entirely or at least been tardy for that business day. Data collected for the program has clearly shown that participating companies experience decreased absenteeism, increased production and thus increased net profit.

The TAP has fulfilled a need within the business community by assuring employers that employees are able to get to and from work regardless of circumstances. The outcome has been the employers and employees are being offered an extremely valuable service efficiently and effectively. The employers that are served in the TAP have expressed extraordinary satisfaction with this project.

For more information, contact Paeye Heckel, Marketing Manager-Employment Programs, SHEA Services, 1819 Aberg Avenue, Madison, Wisconsin 53704, (608) 245-5380, pheckel@chorus.net.

Pyramid Prize Nominations

District of Columbia

Project Empowerment

Project Empowerment is an initiative of the District of Columbia Department of Employment Services (DOES) that offers eligible District residents the opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge to reach their career goals and achieve sustained self-sufficiency. To enter Project Empowerment a participant must be receiving or eligible for public assistance or must be a non-custodial parent, whose child is eligible for, or receiving, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program benefits.

Components of the program include:

- A full day of orientation to introduce the program, its expectations and services to potential participants;
- Coaching and assessment to identify and analyze each participant's skills, abilities, interests, and hobbies, which help to develop an employment plan and eventual job match;
- Job readiness workshops and training; and
- Vocational education and adult basic education.

Participants who lack work experience are placed in temporary positions for up to 16 weeks, where they receive a salary while gaining experience to obtain a permanent fulltime position. Unsubsidized employment is available for those with significant skills or job readiness through the Job Club, which offers four weeks of help and coaching to help participants find a permanent full-time position.

Participant job retention and staff follow-up are the keys to Project Empowerment's success. Program staff keep in touch with the participant even after they have found employment. This allows staff to monitor and support the continued progress of each "empowered" participant. Further, the program offers an excellent incentive of \$1,000 to participants for maintaining full-time employment for at least six months. If a participant finds his or her own full-time job the first fifty dollars is given at that time while the rest is given incrementally throughout a six-month period. Participants are encouraged to use this bonus incentive toward continuing their education, obtaining housing or transportation.

In one year, the program was developed, implemented and enrolled over 1,000 participants. Of the 1,000 enrollees, more than 573 have been placed in unsubsidized employment and have completely transitioned from public assistance. The program has been able to place approximately 50 percent of the participants in a GED program as a first step to improve their educational level.

For more information, contact Charles Jones, Director, Project Empowerment, District of Columbia Department of Employment Services, 625 H Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002, (202) 698-5599.

Kansas

The America's Job Link Alliance (AJLA)

The America's Job Link Alliance (AJLA) is an innovative approach that redefines how states resolve their system building needs. The AJLA is an alliance of state workforce agencies created to maximize their return on investments in information systems and to help them achieve the highest level of success in the workforce development strategies and business practices that surround the design, implementation, operation, management and improvement of those systems.

The Alliance members develop modules and technology features together, adapt and improve them to meet their individual needs and share the improvements with other members for their consideration. In addition to system development, the Alliance goes beyond a traditional consortium in that it continues the cooperative relationship past the development efforts to ensure the most effective strategies and business practices that surround the implementation, operation, management and improvement of those systems once they are in place. Each America's Job Link Alliance member state agrees to share in the following areas: technology development, best practices, marketing, training and purchasing.

The Alliance has grown to include seven states since the original Alliance Memorandum of Understanding was signed in November 2000. The core Workforce Investment Act (WIA) compliant system developed in Ohio has been enhanced and customized, and implemented in Kansas as the Kansas Job Link system. Nebraska Workforce Development – Department of Labor and the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission have implemented their versions of Job Link. The Vermont Department of Employment and Training is in the process of implementing its own state specific versions of the Kansas Job Link system. Idaho, Missouri and New Mexico (as well as four non-member states) are currently evaluating to see how the available modules might fit into their business plans.

The depth of the America's Job Link Alliance can be measured in the reduction of time, cost and risk involved in implementing the Alliance system. The Kansas Department of Human Resources was able to implement their fully compliant WIA operating system in four months for an investment of approximately \$2.3 million – a savings of more than \$10 million from the Ohio costs. The Nebraska Workforce Development - Department of Labor implemented Job Link for \$663,000, estimating that participation in the Alliance has already saved Nebraska taxpayers at least 1,920 hours of development time and \$200,000 of developer cost. By collaborating in the Alliance, Nebraska was also able to design, develop, and implement a jobseeker and employer self-service tool utilizing O*NET in

less than six months. Because of Nebraska's participation in the America's Job Link Alliance, the state was able to leverage the analysis, functionality, and design of the self-service module for employers and jobseekers, which was already developed and tested by other Alliance members.

Oklahoma implemented Service Link for \$100,000 and will implement Job Link for \$100,000 (including equipment) for a savings of approximately \$1.9 million for development based on Kansas' costs. Vermont will implement Job Link and Service Link for \$175,000 (including equipment) for a savings of another \$1.9 million.

For more information, contact William Sanders, Chief Information Officer and Director of Employment Security, Kansas Department of Human Resources, 1309 SW Topeka Boulevard, Topeka, Kansas 66612, (785) 296-5075, wnsanders@hr.state.ks.us.

Michigan Career Development System

Under the leadership of the Michigan Department of Career Development, each of the 25 business-led Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), along with school districts and community colleges working through Education Advisory Groups (EAGs) in their region, decided to improve their region's competitiveness by developing a regional plan for success that would mobilize resources from all partner agencies to achieve common strategic goals. The initiative has resulted in unprecedented interagency communication, collaboration, alignment of resources, and as a result, education and job training reside side-by-side in a meaningful career development system.

The program's accomplishments include implementation of the Career Development System — a statewide initiative in all of Michigan's 25 Workforce Development Board regions. Each region has a strategic plan to focus education and workforce dollars on priority issues and concerns. A multi-agency team designs and oversees implementation of the plan.

In addition to their legislatively mandated role to advise the state's Career Preparation program, Educational Advisory Groups (EAGs) now serve as the strategic planning arm of Workforce Development Boards on educational issues. This new role has helped EAGs recruit many more senior executives from education and business as members.

In order to ensure continuous improvement, the department established two indices to determine whether the Career Development System is improving. The customer satisfaction index, which measures awareness, use and satisfaction, rose 13 percent between 2000 and 2001. Another index on career development system success combines performance measures for workforce development, secondary and postsecondary career-technical preparation, adult education, vocational rehabilitation, and closure of the skills gap.

State and local workforce investment boards have been looking for ways to influence the educational system in their communities. "Building Strategic Partnerships for Career Development" is a strategic planning initiative that asks educators to work with workforce agencies and business to create a seamless system to serve students and workers. Strategic planning, which aligns many of the individual categorical program plans to support the region's overall strategic plan, drives the integration of education and workforce programs by encouraging collaborative spending on top priority issues.

In Michigan, 25 WDBs, 25 EAGs, local school districts accounting for 75 percent of all K-12 enrollment, all 28 community colleges, and many stakeholders and citizens were engaged in this strategic planning effort through work groups and town meetings.

For more information, contact Marvin N. Pichla, Executive Director, Thumb Area Michigan Works!, 3270 Wilson Street, Marletter, Michigan 48453, (989) 635-3561, pichlam@thumbworks.org.

Nebraska

Grand Island Career Center

Dedicated leadership at the local level makes the One-Stop career center in rural Nebraska a reality. The Grand Island community, which is located in the center of Nebraska, took on the rewarding challenge of creating Nebraska's first comprehensive One-Stop career center. The Grand Island initiative was a direct result of dedicated leadership and collaboration at the local level.

The mayor, city council, county commissioners, industrial development and the business community realized that providing workforce services through a One-Stop career center gave this rural community an advantage in recruiting and retaining employers. With the threat of Case/New Holland (a farm equipment manufacturer) moving its operation and 800 jobs out of state, Mayor Ken Gnadt mobilized private and public partners to create the Grand Island One-Stop Career Center. The creation of the center was spearheaded by the Heartland Community Resource Committee, which was comprised of members from state and local government, education, the business community, and representatives from other community and local resource agencies dedicated to improving the standard of life in Nebraska.

The career center offers a unique atmosphere and a single point of entry with a common electronic intake shared by all career center partners. The partners include the Wagner Peyser Act, Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Health and Human Services programs, Veterans programs, Education programs, Job Corps, Economic Development, National Association of Farm Workers, Goodwill, Unemployment Insurance, and Nebraska Community Services. These partners provide primary activities that include job placement, job search, job referrals, assessment, counseling, labor market information, WIA core, intensive and training services, Adult basic education, Welfare to Work, Employment 1st and Workfare services, supportive services, and employer services for public assistance recipients, migrant farm workers, and veterans. Through technology, the career center can refer a customer who cannot be served on-site to other One-Stop partners who can provide the necessary services. This is critical in the delivery of services in a rural area.

The successful and dedicated efforts of Heartland Community Resources Committee resulted in the Grand Island One-Stop Career Center becoming the first center to meet the Governor's certification requirements and has been successfully promoted as a role model for implementation of other One-Stops across the State. The center was the recipient of the Grand Island Area Chamber of Commerce's Partners in Progress award for 2002.

For more information, contact Curt Beck, Marketing and Communications Administrator, Nebraska Workforce Development, Nebraska Department of Labor, 550 South 16th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4600, (402) 471-3385, cbeck@dol.state.ne.us.

North Dakota

The Youth Employment and Training Program (YETP)

The Youth Employment and Training Program (YETP) is a collaborative effort between the lead agencies of Grand Forks Job Service, Grand Forks Park District, and Grand Forks Office of Urban Development, to provide the leadership and management for a comprehensive training program that addresses the challenges of serving disadvantaged youth. In doing so, the YETP networks and partners with many other educational and social service agencies, and is designed to offer a

comprehensive curriculum with opportunities tailored specifically to address the needs of the program participants.

As a successful intermediary organization, the YETP serves the Grand Forks community and surrounding region. This program utilizes the advantages of inter-agency collaboration in serving its clients by eliminating duplication, increasing inter-agency communication, enhancing referral processes, pooling resources for related objectives, and giving 'staying power' to services through the use of intermediary coordinators and mentors. This network of partners with the YETP as the hub agency creates a delivery system that is seamless, less confusing, and more effective for participants. This program serves the community through its partners in developing and performing community-based projects/activities for the surrounding region, taking advantage of community-based learning, and comprehensive one-on-one learning for its participants.

The YETP has been nominated for Best Practices by the Department of Labor for the year 2002. It has also won the local and state award from the ARC for Employer of the Year for serving people with disabilities. The Governor's Award for Excellence was given to one of the Youth Counselors for helping to start and implement the YETP. It has also been awarded the City Beautification Award from the local Chamber of Commerce. Housing and Urban Development awarded the YETP best practices for the year 2000. Finally, the YETP has been awarded grants from Bremer Bank, United Way, US Bank, Community Development Block Grants through HUD, US West, the local Chamber of Commerce, and the Children's Coordinating Committee.

The YETP creatively seeks out and takes initiative to partner with agencies in the community to serve the individual needs of youth. The utilization of these community agencies' resources allows the participants to receive services above and beyond what any one program could offer. The youth involvement with the YETP and all of the community agency partners creates a connection and ownership within the community that benefits both youth and the community as a whole.

For more information, contact Larry Anderson, CSA IV Director, Job Service North Dakota, 1501 28th Avenue South, Grand Forks, North Dakota 58201, (701) 795-3703, landerso@state.nd.us.

Oklahoma

Tulsa Workforce Investment Board, Inc.

The fundamental reason the Tulsa Workforce Investment Board, Inc. (Tulsa WIB) exists is as a catalyst for an innovative workforce development system that creates and maintains a globally competitive workforce that supports economic development and self-sufficiency for the citizens of the Tulsa region. Its mission is to create and sustain a formal workforce development system that facilitates assessing goals and abilities of the workforce, identifying the needs of employers, and identifying and coordinating resources in order to enhance the alignment of workforce development services in the Tulsa region.

Its vision is a comprehensive, integrated service delivery system that prepares individuals for economic prosperity, and positions Tulsa for economic progress. There is overwhelming evidence that the quality of the workforce is critical to a positive regional business climate. Economic development, as well as education and training professionals and their respective agencies, continue to be challenged by prospective business expansions and relocations to ensure an adequate supply of highly skilled talent.

There is a wide range of public policy as well as strategic business considerations influencing a company's ability to recruit and retain a qualified workforce. The region that successfully engages the

business community to creatively address these challenges will create its future competitive advantage. Workforce development is indeed the defining economic issue for the Tulsa region.

The Tulsa WIB works directly with employers across the industry spectrum to develop a complete picture of labor market dynamics and proactive solutions to address these complex challenges. The Tulsa WIB has led four major phases to increase the quality and responsiveness of the Tulsa region's workforce system. The four phases include:

- Phase I - One-Stop Center "As-Is" Process Mapping with Williams Companies;
- Phase II - Regional Community Audit (Baseline, Sectoral Skills & Assets Inventory);
- Phase III- Self-Assessment & Strategic Planning; and
- Phase IV - One-Stop Center Process Improvement, Chartering & Baldrige Assessment.

For more information, contact Terry Watson, Oklahoma Security Commission, Will Rogers Memorial Office Building, 2401 North Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73152-2003, (405) 557-7294, terry.watson@oesc.state.ok.us.

Tennessee

Northeast Tennessee Workforce Investment Board/Bush Hog, LLC Partnership

The Northeast Tennessee Workforce Investment Board stands by its mission: "To enhance economic development in Northeast Tennessee by providing guidance and resources to meet employment needs." Meeting employers' and jobseekers' needs includes providing administrative and hands-on services through the Northeast Tennessee Career Center (Washington County) and the other four affiliate sites.

The Northeast Tennessee Career Center provides comprehensive services to employers, employees, and jobseekers. This center provides a dynamic network of employment, educational, and training opportunities which serves as a bridge connecting people and jobs. The other four affiliate sites provide similar services to their customers. Several of the career center partners teamed up with Bush Hog, LLC, to form a workforce development partnership that was instrumental in the planning and implementation of this project.

Bush Hog, LLC, is one of the leading producers of agricultural implements and machinery utilized by farmers, commercial turf maintenance contractors, golf courses, and municipalities. While marketing their product under two brand names, Bush Hog and Great Bend, the product line includes rotary cutters, front-end loaders, finishing mowers, and a wide variety of other implements. The products are distributed through approximately 4,400 dealers located throughout North America (including John Deere, Case, Kubota and others).

Based out of Selma, Alabama, the new Bush Hog plant built in Jonesborough, Tennessee, began its services in late February 2002, and has focused primarily on producing front and mid-mount loaders. It is a state-of-the-art, information technology based, precision manufacturing operation. Production control processes are computerized and customized to the manufacture of "high end" agricultural equipment. Welding operations include use of laser-guided cutting tools and Computer Aided Design and Computer Aided Machining (CAD/CAM) programmable controls. In only its fourth month of operation, this facility is well on its way to transitioning into the production of finishing mowers and backhoes, in addition to the front and mid-mount loaders.

The project has drawn attention from the U.S. Department of Labor, noted for Best Practices in the southeast region. The project has also drawn state and local recognition through local newspapers.

The project has had a tremendous amount of economic impact on the northeast Tennessee communities. The amount of time and funds that have been invested not only builds an accountable workforce investment system, but also builds the morale of those who have now retained jobs in the light of their dislocation or unemployment. This multi-million dollar project represents a great example of public/private partnerships and cooperation between agencies. This partnership is best portrayed in the words of Neal Henson, Human Resource Manager at Bush Hog, "This is the best operation I have had the pleasure to be involved with in my 30 plus years of being in manufacturing."

For more information, contact Susan Cowden, Employment and Training Director, Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 500 James Robertson Parkway, Davy Crockett Tower, 12th Floor, Nashville, Tennessee 37245, (615) 741-3003.

Virginia Career and Resource Center

Basic Services provided by the Suffolk Career and Resource Center include on-site services (screening, enrollment, assessment and counseling) with the Department of Rehabilitative Services, Educational Opportunity Center, Homeless Prevention Program, Educational Opportunity Center, Virginia Extension Service, P.D. Pruden Lifelong Learning Center, and the Welfare-to-Work Program. Off-site partners who provide services include: Even Start, Division of Child Support Enforcement, The Southeastern Tidewater Opportunity Program (S.T.O.P.), Western Tidewater Mental Health, Suffolk Health Department/Healthy Families Program, United Way/Red Cross, Suffolk Public Schools, Genieve Shelter (domestic violence services), Obici Hospital, Suffolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Community Health Center/ Main Street Physicians, Suffolk Literacy Council, Salvation Army, Legal Aid, Opportunity, Development Center, Virginia Employment Commission, and Suffolk Shelter for the Homeless. Additional on-site services include job search assistance, job readiness and work preparedness training classes, money management classes, computer lab services (computers, Internet access, e-mail Inc./Regional Workforce Development, Paul D. Camp Community College Workforce accounts), resume assistance, adult basic education classes, job counseling, health and nutrition classes, vocational assessments, job listings, telephones, fax machine, and a multitude of resource information. Booklets, pamphlets, fliers and other materials are maintained for over 50 organizations and agencies.

The center has brought together over 35 agencies and organizations to work collaboratively to successfully serve the 65,000 citizens of the City of Suffolk. Usage of the Center has increased to over 330 customers per month; approximately 70-80 new customers "discover" the services offered by the Center each month. Attendance at Adult Basic Education classes has grown to 20-25 students per session with 19 students attaining their GED in the past 18 months. Providing 150 job-ready applicants for 12-15 area employers every 6 months has resulted in improved workforce development efforts and relationships with employers. The City's Department of Human Resources refers 15-20 job candidates to the Center each month for typing tests. This results in increasing the candidate pool for job openings requiring this test. Approximately 15-20 citizens attend the Money Smart classes each month. By improving their money management skills, customers are better able to handle their finances and are less likely to require the services of other agencies when emergencies occur. With the resources and services provided by the Center, work-mandated welfare recipients have an employment rate of over 70 percent. All of this has contributed to the city's low unemployment rate of 4.4 percent.

These efforts have resulted in a "de-fragmentation" of existing employment and support services and simplification of accessing these services removing barriers to employment that, in turn, will result in an increased employment and retention rate of those using the center. By re-inventing the Social Services Department from an agency that provided "public assistance" to one that "assists the public"

in moving toward self-sufficiency the center is truly accomplishing the mission of the city to provide superior customer service and to be responsive to its citizens, which includes our employers.

For more information, contact Willie Blanton, Director of WIA, Virginia Employment Commission, 703 East Main Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219, (804) 225-3050, WBlanton@VEC.state.va.us.

Wisconsin

The Oshkosh Area Workforce Development Center (OAWDC)

The Oshkosh Area Workforce Development Center (OAWDC) provides easy access to a comprehensive array of integrated employment, educational, training, and economic development services to meet the needs of jobseekers, employers and the community.

The OAWDC staff strives to provide area employers with a pre-qualified and trained workforce. The center staff implements an efficient process of joint planning and management of multiple training/employment systems, which results in an effective integration and utilization of available resources. Through these joint efforts, the OAWDC provides a comprehensive and centralized resource for program services, job opportunities, employer/jobseeker networking, and regional training opportunities. The co-funded and co-staffed services include:

- Individual resume critiquing;
- Internet usage (employer web site search, national listings, posting resumes, schooling info, etc.);
- Touch screen JobNet computers;
- JOBS Paper (weekly);
- Newspapers/Sunday classifieds;
- Civil service typing tests;
- Tutorials: Typing, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, Outlook;
- Video and written reference libraries on various job search and preparatory topics;
- Free job search related copying, faxing and local phone calls;
- Referrals to DVR for assistance for individuals with disabilities;
- Use of accessible computers for individuals with disabilities;
- One on one resume critiques and assistance with formulating and formatting;
- Advice on interviewing, job searching and follow-up;
- Assistance with cover letters and follow-up/thank you letters;
- On-site mini job fairs;
- PLATO lab for building skills in mathematics, grammar, reading, and for studying to take the high school equivalency exam;
- Referral resource (booklet) guide that customers can take with them that gives numbers and addresses of resources within the community/area that can assist them with various needs to include: food, clothing, shelter, education, healthcare, job preparation, financial management, childcare, crisis intervention, family counseling, abuse shelter, overcoming addiction, etc.;
- O*Net career search;
- Wisconsin Careers, an interactive career development tool that matches individuals interest with over 90,000 Wisconsin employers addresses and phone numbers by occupation;
- Voicemail system for individuals who have no phone where employers can leave voicemail messages for individuals; and,
- Virtual OAWDC web site at <http://www.oshkoshwdc.com>.

The OAWDC has had numerous accomplishments and successes in meeting employers and jobseekers needs, including workshops, job fairs, labor law clinics, and a first of its kind program in

Wisconsin called the Pre-Employment and Training (PET), workforce summit with 50 business and community leaders and a comprehensive Business Plan.

For more information, contact Gary Meyer, Lead Worker and Local Veteran Representative, 315 Algoma Boulevard, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, (920) 232-6272, meyerga@dwd.state.wi.us.