

4th Annual NCACDSS Best Practices Awards Nomination Form

Category: PCC#4 Tier 3
Profiles in Community Collaboration

Project Title: Changing Faces: Issues in Workforce Diversity and Human Resources Conference

Please complete the criteria below in the space provided. Answer all questions completely to maximize your score.

- 1. Project/Program Summary:** Briefly summarize the project's history, purpose, timeline and budget. Each year, Wake County Human Services' Vocational Services division hosts a conference, job fair or other large event. In late 2004, Wake County Vocational Services leadership met to discuss plans for the 2006 event. In the past the organization had focused its efforts on a variety of projects for job seekers and/or human services providers. For 2006, however, we decided to focus on an event that would attract and engage human resource (HR) professionals and small business owner/operators. This would be our first event specifically targeting the business community. Our goals were: to cover the costs of the event through registrations and sponsorships; provide a dynamic learning forum for HR and business leaders; and, to use the conference as a vehicle to further enhance and develop relationships with community business representatives. The project was named "Changing Faces: Issues in Workforce Diversity and Human Resources Conference." A budget of \$23,250.00 was established and planning commenced, with a target date of May 2006.
- 2. Innovation:** Why is the program unique? How does your project differ from similar projects? We partnered with the Raleigh-Wake Human Resource Management Association (RWHRMA)--a local Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) chapter; the Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce, and the Wake Area Business Advisory Council--a business-led Wake County board that was started in 1997. Representatives from each of these organizations, as well as a "core" group of staff from Wake County employment and training programs (i.e., Work First; JobLink; Workforce Investment Act Programs; Workforce Development; PRO-Familia; Working for Kids; Supportive Employment) comprised the very active planning committee. Not only did these organizations provide volunteers for the planning team and help plan and carry out the conference, they also contributed financially to its overall budget. As the first major step in the planning process, the project team surveyed business and HR professionals to help design the content of the conference. (Such as: International Hiring, Legal Issues, Benefits, Interviewing, Disability Management, Unemployment, Culture and Resources.) The conference was designed to be an affordable, local opportunity for training that would build and enhance the relationships between Human Services programs and businesses, many of which employed and/or could potentially employ Human Services consumers.
- 3. Project Success and Impact:** What were the objectives? How well were they met? How widespread is the impact of the project/program? What is the anticipated long-term impact? Did the project involve collaboration with other agencies, non-profits, businesses, etc.? Describe the outcome of the collaboration. With over 175 participants, volunteers and speakers, we realized great success in meeting our objectives. A number of corporate sponsors stepped forward and provided cash

contributions (\$3,500) used to supply conference bags, neck wallets, an on-site resource/refreshment room, conference CDs and volunteer tee-shirts. Still other companies provided donations of audio visual equipment, media and use of a website for on-line registrations, valued at \$3,000. Registration fees brought in over \$15,000 for this event; therefore, we did not incur costs above the indirect costs of staff time spent planning and staffing the conference. Attendees were concentrated from our local area but included participants from across the state including Wilmington, Guilford, Charlotte, Cherokee and even an out-of-state participant from Virginia. We had four keynote general sessions and 18 concurrent workshops. Attendees were engaged and conference evaluations validated the success of the event. During the evaluation process, participants were able to indicate they wanted additional information from the partnering organizations. Of the 89 evaluations, 145 business contacts were generated from the engaged attendees to receive follow-up attention from the partner organizations. For example, business representatives are currently receiving membership details from the BAC and results will be monitored and measured. Communications will be on-going to keep these businesses engaged to result in establishing additional employment and training opportunities for WCHS program participants. Each partner agency are conducting their own follow-up.

4. **Project Effort and Difficulty:** How well did the program use limited resources? What obstacles or challenges did you overcome? How was this done? Our planning committee met monthly throughout most of the planning (18 months) and was able to stay on top of our ongoing tasks, outlined in bi-weekly project updates and tracking documents. We had representatives from Raleigh-Wake Human Resource Management Association, Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce, Wake Area Business Advisory Council (includes business and non-profit membership) and all seven Wake County employment and training programs on the planning committee, plus additional representatives who volunteered to staff the event. Having supportive County leadership and outside representatives who were committed to the effort allowed us to meet all of our goals and objectives. Our fee structure was designed to maximize resources to allow us to have a full two-day conference with all associated costs covered. The largest obstacle to overcome was in public relations--PR. Because this was a new event with a different focus and audience than we had historically targeted, companies were not fully aware of the quality of event we were developing. It was through collaboration that we were able to market our quality through existing organizations. For example, we were allowed to market the conference at monthly RWHRMA meetings, attended by hundreds of business representatives. Some of these businesses became conference sponsors as well as sent their staff members to attend the conference. We received pre-certification credit from the SHRM/HRCI (Human Resource Continuing Instruction) which authorized accreditation of 10.5 hours per attendee. This allowed us to use the SHRM/HRCI seal to demonstrate the validity of the content of conference workshops. Advertising can be extremely cost prohibitive; however, our partners provided a tremendous service by publicizing the event through websites, e-blast communications, Triangle Business Journal, Chamber publications, among others.

5. **Ability to Replicate Project:** Can this project be duplicated in other counties? What could counties do to minimize obstacles and problems? Yes, this collaboration and event could be duplicated in other areas of the state. Local agencies can search out the local SHRM chapter and Chamber(s) in their areas to begin planning. Surveying their local business community can help maximize impact and show responsiveness to the business community. The relationships built through the collaboration and the actual event can form lasting partnerships and networks in planting seeds for potential future impact. Planning is critical and a strong team that brings a variety of skills,

experience and goals to the table is essential. Outside participation on the planning committee allows for the broadest perspective and impact.