

Workforce Learning Summit Innovation or Best Practice

Wilkes Community College

Recruit-Screen-Train Model

Companies ranging from engineering and law firms to a Fortune 500 customer service operation needed help reaching, selecting and skilling up qualified applicants. Working directly with employers, Wilkes Community College and its Workforce Investment Act (WIA) staff tailored a package of recruitment, screening and training services to meet each employer's specific needs.

DETAILS

Companies ranging from engineering and law firms to a Fortune 500 customer service operation in Wilkes Community College's service area needed help identifying, screening and skilling up qualified applicants. For smaller or newer companies, the challenge is often that they lack an HR department or the resources to fully carry out HR functions. For larger companies, help in screening large numbers of applicants and defraying costs can be important to complement the HR functions they have.

Wilkes Community College and its Workforce Investment Act (WIA) staff worked closely with employers to define their workforce requirements and tailor their services to offer the following as needed:

- **Recruitment assistance**, including development of job postings and paid advertising
- **Pre-employment screening**, with help carrying out **assessments, job fairs, interviews, and/or interviewing space** at the JobLink Career Center* or the college classrooms for the employer to use
- **Pre-employment training** (Customized Training, Continuing Education, On-the-Job Training (WIA), Human Resources Development/HRD job seeking and soft skills training, and/or curriculum)
- **Managed applicant pool** – e.g., connecting WIA/JobLink Career Center customers to opportunities, and creating a matrix to help those playing HR roles with the company based on the company's criteria
- **Referral process for unsuccessful applicants**, e.g., referral back to HRD classes and employability labs to hone skills and retest

Most important, the team *listened to employers*.

Industrial Process Solutions, an alternative energy conversion company, was the guinea pig for this approach in May 2008. As a new company, IPS didn't have an HR department at the time. The team offered paid advertising, a job fair attended by over 200 applicants, screening (including use of a matrix with the company's screening criteria), pre-employment training through Continuing Education and skill-specific training for welders.

*As of 2014, the State is transitioning its system of JobLink Career Centers to a new system of NCWorks Career Centers.

In 2008, the team and its Business Services Representative started offering the pre-employment process to Lowes, a Fortune 500 company with a customer contact and support center in Wilkes County. Using the process established at its center in New Mexico, Lowe's Companies reached out to the workforce development team in Wilkes County to help with staffing needs. The team offered job fairs, job listings, assistance to individuals with the online application and resume and provided a Lowes representative for weekly on-site for recruiting at the JobLink Career Center. Assistance with pre-employment assessments was also offered. Wilkes Community College provided classrooms for interviewing, pre-employment assessments, hiring events. Assessments included behavioral, computer skills, and other assessments according to, "what Lowe's told us they needed." The workforce development team has assessed nearly 2,000 candidates for Lowes since 2008.

Brock and Scott, a law firm involved in foreclosure work, made use of the pre-assessment assistance and also On-the-Job Training. Brock and Scott has doubled its workforce, with 11 dislocated workers placed at the company with assistance from the community college/workforce development team. Brock and Scott says that "They [applicants] understand our processes" thanks to help from the college and the JobLink Career Center – applicants already know what they need to do even before they come to apply."

The primary partners of the college in this workforce development model are employers. Wilkes Community College serves as the contractor for WIA services through the local workforce development board. In partnership with the Division of Workforce Solution staff, WCC plays a key role in the provision of JobLink Career Center services.

Other partners include:

- WCC Human Resource Development – provide staffing for the JobLink Center computer resource area, instruction for employability skills classes, and assistance with pre-employment skills testing services.
- Economic Development Corporation – assists with outreach to inform business and industry about the service as part of their retention and expansion program. Included as incentive for new industry recruitment.

Implementation began in May 2008.

Partner Type(s):

- Business/Industry (direct involvement)
- Workforce Development Board/One-Stop
- Economic Development
- Other: Nonprofit, State Agency

Impact/Outcomes

- Employers served = 55
- Employees hired = Do not have outcome data
- Applicants receiving pre-employment training = Do not have data
- On-the-job training –
 - 101 people back to work
 - 28 companies assisted at time of presentation

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- Amount reimbursed to companies to offset cost of training PY – YTD at time of presentation = \$582,411.00
- Economic impact for OJT – “The High Country Workforce Development Board calculates the \$503,710 expended NEG OJT Grant funds (PY 2010 – 2011) will result in \$1,500,000 in increased earnings for customers who stay on the job for 12 months. Additional impact from the increased earnings includes increased local sales estimated at \$1,350,000.”

Funding Source(s)

Workforce Investment Act funds

State college funds

REFLECTIONS**Innovation or Best Practice**

Noteworthy in this practice is the coordination of a large variety of resources to meet the needs of employers and simultaneously connect job seekers served by the public workforce system to appropriate opportunities.

Lessons Learned

- The team credits listening to employers as the most critical aspect of the project.
- Team approach to service provision is essential to this model.
- Partnership and collaboration is key to success.

Scalability

Wilkes Community College's history of sponsoring Workforce Investment Act services (ranging from the Career Center to the business service function) aided in the coordination of resources needed to carry out this Recruit-Screen-Train approach. Community colleges that host their NCWorks Center and WIA-funded Business Service Representative may find it easier than other colleges to replicate this model. However, with collaboration, the strategies can be and have been implemented in other communities.

RESOURCES**Workforce Learning Summit Presenters**

Wilkes Community College:

Dr. Gordon Burns, President

Ginger Shaffer, Chair of Workforce Development (former Workforce Investment Act Director)

Rick Roten, Business Services Representative

Lowes: Craig Larson, Talent Acquisition Manager

Karen Huffman, Contact Center Recruiter

Brock and Scott: Sharon Nellenbach, HR Generalist

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