



**Economic
Development and
Growing the
Economy**

**UW
Extension**

Profiles of Best Practices

New Economy Workforce (NEW Coalition)

Community, County

Marathon County and neighboring communities

Area of Project Impact

Central Wisconsin

Population Affected

125,000+ (Information Technology Professionals)

Situation

The information technology industry offers substantial growth opportunities for economic development in communities as well as higher paying jobs for workers. This sector also requires opportunities for continuing workforce education; however, there are limited opportunities for continuing education for Information Technology (IT) professionals in central Wisconsin. The lack of workforce development opportunities presented challenges for both IT professionals and economic development in this industry sector.

Economic Development Strategies

A business-education partnership formed to create the "New Economy Workforce (NEW Coalition)" to enhance continuing educational opportunities for IT professionals in central Wisconsin. This workforce development strategy seeks to improve IT professionals' abilities to lead organizations and businesses into the future of rapidly changing technology while also helping to improve the competitiveness of technology businesses and industries in Marathon County, as well as public institutions including Northcentral Technical College, University of Wisconsin-Marathon County and University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

Implementation

The NEW Coalition formed to identify and develop educational programming to enhance the skills of IT professionals for workforce development in central Wisconsin. This group is currently led by an administrator who reports to an eight-member advisory board, which includes the heads of four contributing Coalition member businesses and organizations as well as the heads of three Coalition member educational institutions and a representative of the Chamber of Commerce Workforce Development Committee. Within this structure, there is an administrative committee as well as a curriculum committee to advance the goals and objectives of the NEW Coalition. In particular, the curriculum committee devised workforce educational programming with input from faculty and administration of area colleges as well as member organizations. In addition to the creation of curriculum for professional development, the group also sought and acquired financial resources for the start-up and administration of these educational programs.

The Coalition offered its first educational programs for IT professionals through Northcentral Technical College and UW-Marathon County and UW-Stevens Point in the spring of 2002. In 2002, two courses of instruction for IT development were offered, including "Information Management" and "Web Development." In the winter of 2003, a third course was added to the curriculum to cover the topic of "Project Management." This educational programming was made available to NEW Coalition member as well as non-member organizations. As of the spring of 2003, 109 individuals from 13 different businesses and public institutions have enrolled in these Coalition classes.

Partners and Leadership

Coalition members include Northcentral Technical College, UW-Marathon County and UW-Stevens Point as well as 15 contributing businesses, public institutions and foundations. The Coalition operates under the umbrella of the Wausau/Marathon County Chamber of Commerce Workforce Development Committee.

Outcomes

The 109 IT professionals from 13 organizations who have completed convenient continuing education classes would probably not have done so under former circumstances when access to such programming was inaccessible, time-intensive and burdensome. It is expected that the Coalition's educational programming in IT will result in IT workforce development, which will make local businesses, organizations and the area more competitive for attracting both additional IT professionals as well as IT businesses.

Contact

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