



Economic  
Development and  
Growing the  
Economy



# Profiles of Best Practices

## In the Works

### Community, County

Sauk County

### Area of Project Impact

Sauk County

### Population Affected

Sauk County 55,000 and Baraboo/West Baraboo 13,000

## Situation

In the last few years, there have been significant changes in the economic opportunities for people in and around Sauk County. Among the major changes that impacted the local economy were the closing and relocation of five area manufacturers and pressures from the global economy. Nevertheless, Sauk County has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the state and people from outside the county recognize the potential to find jobs in the area. For these reasons, there are more people looking for work in the area than ever before, including many who have not been through a job search in a long time. Employers felt that they were not getting enough qualified applicants for vacant jobs. Overall, economic pressures have increased employers' understanding of the need to focus on many different kinds of workers.

## Economic Development Strategies

Sauk County Job Center staff recognized that there is a need to better prepare job seekers from a wide range of backgrounds to find new employment. "In the Works" is an intensive employment readiness training program that the Sauk County Job Center staff designed to assist job seekers with their job search. This week-long program was initially based on a model presented at the 2002 Governors Conference on Economic Development. The program is taught by Sauk County Job Center employees.

## Implementation

Since the program was initiated in June 2003, more than forty people have attended the week-long training program that is currently offered once every month. The curriculum focuses on topics that were repeatedly discussed with clients and those that were identified by employers as issues of concern. Program participants gain exposure to a range of skills and strategies including: time management, overcoming barriers, conflict resolution, interviewing, resume preparation and dressing for success. The training involves a wide spectrum of participants from a variety of age groups and educational levels.

## Partners and Leadership

This program does not have any minimum requirements compared to other state sponsored employment programs because staff affiliated with Job Service, Central Wisconsin Community Action Council, and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation support the program and act as instructors. Additional support comes from the Sauk County Development Corporation. Unfortunately, there are no funds available to assist people with obstacles to attending the course such as childcare or travel.

Employers and merchants in the area have contributed to the program. Specifically, employers have volunteered to teach some of the classes. Also, as an incentive for continuous involvement by participants, merchants donated prizes such as coupons that are used for games and completing homework. For example, the local St. Vincent's provided a coupon to all participants for purchasing interview outfits. Finally, businesses have also asked that the training be conducted on-site in the future, which is an indication of their support of the program.

## **Outcomes**

This is a great example of a partnership program that serves both job seekers and employers. "In the Works" has proven to be very beneficial to those who have participated in it, regardless of where they were in their job search. The majority of graduates, approximately 70 percent, have found jobs within the first three months of completing the program. Participants acknowledged how the training assisted in their job search. For example, one person said "It helped me to prepare for the interview and I was much less nervous". As a result of this job preparation program, employers have a better-equipped group of candidates from which to select employees.

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