

North Carolina Work First Demonstration Grant Best Practice Models Reference Guide

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History of Work First and Work First Demonstration Grants

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program in North Carolina is Work First Family Assistance and is based on the premise that parents have a responsibility to support themselves and their children. Work First provides parents with short-term training and supportive services to help them become employed and self-sufficient. North Carolina's goal is to help all families move to self-sufficiency.

The Work First Program in North Carolina promotes a strengths-based, family-centered approach. The Work First Program shares in the mission “to provide family-centered services to children and families to achieve well being through ensuring self-sufficiency, support, safety and permanence.”

On February 8, 2006, President Bush signed into law the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA), which reauthorized TANF through 2010. The DRA directed the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to define work activities to establish required work hours and to identify what categories of TANF recipients will be required to work. In addition, the DRA recalibrated the base year for the Caseload Reduction Credit from 1995 to 2005. With the more stringent regulations developed by HHS and the recalibration of the Caseload Reduction Credit, work participation is critical as Work First is now serving clients with more difficult needs and barriers to self-sufficiency. Therefore, while the federal participation rate requirement has not changed, it has become increasingly difficult to place clients into employment opportunities. Inability to meet the performance measures has the potential to result in financial penalties for the State, which would derail the progress our counties are making with families.

In an effort to refocus on the intended purposes of TANF and to assist the State and counties in meeting the new challenges of the DRA, meeting the required Work Participation rates and avoiding financial penalties, the North Carolina General Assembly allocated \$19,048,322 in TANF funds for county Work First Demonstration Grants (WFDG) during the 2006 Session. The county demonstration grants were awarded for up to three years with all projects ending no later than the end of SFY 2008-2009.

Work First Demonstration Grants gave counties the opportunity to increase work participation in an effort to meet the federal requirements for work participation rates. The mission of the Work First Demonstration Grants was to identify best practices used by counties to improve their work participation rates and to contribute to the overall rate for the State of North Carolina.

Work First Demonstration Grants projects incorporated strategies with the following objectives:

- Increasing the individual counties' Work Participation Rates
- Strengthening county and Community Partnerships
- Identifying Work First strategies that could be adopted by all counties that would result in an increased State Participation Rate

In 2006, the Division of Social Services encouraged all counties to submit a proposal detailing how they would increase its work participation rate, which in turn would help the State meet required federal participation rates. The Division had 54 counties submit proposals for Work First Demonstration Grants for SFY 2006-2007. Thirty-six (36) counties were awarded Demonstration Grants in October 2006 for SFY 2006-2007 in the amount of \$5,691,175.

The Work First Demonstration Grant had two time-limited consultant positions. These consultant positions had line responsibility for ensuring county Work First programs maximized efforts to meet Federal and State work participation requirements outlined in policy.

These responsibilities encompassed a vast array of areas, but the primary focus was on providing training and technical assistance to counties that received funding to implement demonstration projects through their Work First programs. In addition to on-site, telephone consultation and e-mail correspondence, this was accomplished through various means, including:

- Facilitation of group meetings across the State with WFDG counties
- Providing updates at monthly Employment Services Committee meetings
- Participation in Work First Learning Institutes
- Presentations at other Division sponsored meetings and Institutes
- Joint team meetings with Work First Representatives

Demonstration Grant counties also submitted monthly written progress reports to the Division of Social Services. These monthly reports were reviewed by the WFDG Consultants and were used to identify promising practices and to provide technical assistance in areas of need or concern.

In addition to the above activities, the WFDG Consultants and the Local Support Program Supervisor developed a Strategic Plan for the demonstration grant activities. The Plan included the establishment of a statewide work group to review best practices identified in Work First programs either through Demonstration projects or through Electing strategies. The intent of this work group was:

1. To recommend what best practices could be implemented statewide.
2. To increase Work Participation Rates.
3. To identify practices that would require changes to current policy.
4. To determine practices that would require legislative changes prior to statewide implementation.
5. To develop models of best practices and assist in the compilation of a Best Practices Guide to be shared with State representatives and all county Departments of Social Services.

The WFDG Consultants were the primary persons charged with the establishment and facilitation of the work group throughout the Demonstration Grant period. These time-limited positions ended June 30, 2009.

During the 2007 Session, the North Carolina General Assembly approved the continuation for Work First Demonstration Grants with all projects ending no later than the end of SFY 2009-2010. All counties had the opportunity to submit a proposal for the second grant year process. Proposals were required to detail how that county would increase its work participation rate, which in turn would help the State meet required federal participation rates. All counties submitting proposals with an acceptable grant proposal/plan for the State Fiscal Year 2007-2008 received awards. Fifty-two (52) counties submitted proposals that were approved for awards for SFY 2007-2008 in August 2007 in the amount of \$6,331,336.

There were 35 Work First Demonstration Grant counties continuing from SFY 2006-2007 and 17 new Work First Demonstration Grant counties. All first year grant counties with the exception of one (Onslow County) submitted proposals to continue a second year.

The 35 counties that continued in the second year of the Demonstration Grant period were able to continue their initiatives and showed improved intensive services while enhancing their customer services to promote long-term self-sufficiency goals. The 17 new grant counties implemented county models, and began showing positive change in their participation rates.

Fifteen (15) demonstration strategies identified positive outcomes to increase the participation rate. Counties were able to implement similar projects; however, the projects differed in their format/content due to the county's resources and their geographical location in the State. Promising strategies identified include:

1. Functional Capacity Evaluations (FCE)/Vocational Assessments (VA)
2. Job Developer
3. Job Coach
4. Additional Staff, mostly for specialized activities
5. On-the-Job Training
6. Pay for Performance (Work First Benefits)
7. Swift Sanction
8. Employment Resource Lab
9. Job Readiness Classes (JRC)/Work Keys Certification (WKC)
10. Steps to Self Sufficiency/Job Readiness Instructor
11. Subsidized Employment
12. Transportation Assistance
13. Exempt parents with a child under three months of age from the work requirement instead of offering exemptions to parents whose children are under one year of age.
14. Collaboration with Community Partners
15. Participant Incentives

While many of the above listed strategies were similar to past efforts, the one-on-one attention given to the work participants and the intensity of services make the dynamics of the intervention strategy different.

During the 2008 Session, the North Carolina General Assembly approved the continuation of Work First Demonstration Grants with all projects ending no later than the end of SFY 2009-2010. The 52 current demonstration grant counties had the opportunity to submit a proposal for the third grant year process. Proposals were required to detail the progress made to date, document any additions to the current projects, and state how the projects would increase the work participation rate in that county. Forty-nine (49) of the 52 counties submitted proposals for SFY 2008-2009. Of the 49 counties, 48 counties were approved for funding with an acceptable grant proposal/plan, and one county did not receive funding due to an unacceptable grant proposal/plan. In addition, one new county was approved for funding this SFY with an acceptable grant proposal/plan. Forty-nine (49) counties received funding for SFY 2008-2009 in August 2008 in the amount of \$7,428,929.

Forty-six (46) counties entering their second or third year of the demonstration grant period continued their initiatives and showed improved specialized services as they continued to provide enhanced customer service. Moreover, counties showed improved work participation rates.



Work First Demonstration Grant Best Practice Workgroup

The Division of Social Services established a Work First Best Practice Work Group in July 2008 to identify best practices that counties can use to improve the work participation rates. This Work First Best Practice Work Group has 11 State committee members and 20 DSS county committee members.

The following participants gave their time and talents to the Work First Best Practice Workgroup making this reference guide available to all 100 North Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS):

County Staff Committee Members:

Carrie Gibson, Buncombe County DSS
David Joyner, Davie County DSS
Susan Thompson, Forsyth County DSS
Angi Karchmer, Gaston County DSS
Patti Leonard, Henderson County DSS
Linda Bledsoe, Iredell County DSS
Sherre Dean, Jackson County DSS
Candy Wilcox, Lincoln County DSS
Yolanda Vance, Mecklenburg County DSS

Teresa Clay, Orange County DSS
Linda Collins, Richmond County DSS
Sandra Cox, Robeson County DSS
Monica Price, Sampson County DSS
Serena Westra, Vance County DSS
Barbara Harris, Wake County DSS
Andrea Alexander, Washington County DSS
Christy Nash, Wilson County DSS

Division Staff/Committee Members:

Tracy Hicks, Work First Demonstration Grant
Consultant/Facilitator
Judy Lawrence, Work First Demonstration Grant
Consultant/Facilitator
Johnice Tabron, Work First Local Support
Program Supervisor/Co-Facilitator
Wendy Rachels, Work First Representative/Co-
Facilitator
Sybil Wheeler, Work First Representative/Co-
Facilitator

Karen Calhoun, Local Business Liaison
Sara Mims, Assistant Section Chief of Economic
and Family Services
Gretchen Williams, Work First Policy/Trainer
Barbara Strickland, Work First Monitor
Barbara Simpson, Performance Management
Dean Duncan, UNC-CH School of Social Work



Two of the goals of the Work First Best Practice Work Group were:

1. Identify best practices implemented through the Work First Demonstration Grants and Electing County strategies, with a focus on evaluating the previously 15 identified promising strategies (See Page 5) and
2. Determine which of those strategies were practical, replicable and deemed most likely to positively impact work participation rates.

As of May 2009, the work group concluded its review of practices based on Work First Demonstration Grant initiatives. Models were developed for the following best practices:

1. Family Coach/Mentor
2. Job Developer/Job Placement
3. Transportation Assistance Programs
4. Structured Job Search/Job Readiness Activities
5. Upfront Services
6. On-the-Job Training/Subsidized Employment
7. Enhanced Community Partnerships
8. Enhanced Work Experience Programs
9. Participant Incentive Programs



Introduction to Work First Best Practice Models

The Work First Best Practice Work Group developed a procedure for reviewing and determining best practices identified. The strategies on the list for review by the work group were identified by the Local Support Operations at the Division, from information shared during group Demonstration Grant meetings and from an initial study of the Work First Demonstration Grants conducted by UNC-CH School of Social Work. The Division had not previously endorsed these strategies.

The work group considered the following in relation to each strategy:

1. Is the strategy replicable?
2. Is the strategy family-centered?
3. Is there a cost involved with implementing and/or maintaining the strategy?
4. Does the strategy require a legislative change?
5. Does the strategy require a State policy change?
6. Will the strategy increase State Participation Rate?
7. Does the strategy enhance services?
8. Does the strategy appear to be a best practice?

In addition, the following criteria were considered in determining which counties were selected to submit models of their respective strategies:

1. Did the county's participation rate increase since implementing this strategy? If so, what was the increase from January 2008 to June 2008?
2. Did the county meet/exceed participation rates? If so, how many times did they met/exceed participation rates from January 2008 to June 2008?
3. If the strategy did not increase participation rates but found to be beneficial to participants and the Work First program, how would the work group support as a best practice?

The group decided to request up to four models of each strategy from counties. However, if a strategy encompassed various practices, additional models could be requested to insure that enough detail was provided.

The work group considered the following as integral pieces during the development of the models:

1. What is the target population?
2. What activities should this project include?
3. What is the step-by-step experience of the participant through interaction with this project?
4. What is the anticipated impact to the Participation Rate?
5. What is the estimated cost per participant?

The group reviewed each model provided by counties and, as a group, developed one model per best practice that could be implemented statewide. This often occurred by incorporating different aspects of each model or development of a model independent of the ones submitted.

Work First Best Practice Model

Family Coach/Mentor

Introduction:

The best practice of creating a Family Coach position or mentoring program has demonstrated positive outcomes for Work First participants. Mentoring programs are designed to provide support and advice, as well as teach skills that will help Work First participants cope with problems that have or will arise at home and work. This, in turn, provides the participant with skills and training needed to retain employment and self-sufficiency.

Population Served:

When implementing one or more of these practices in your county, the populations served may include the following groups:

1. Current/active participants – top priority
2. Applicants/potential participants
3. Former participants

While this is a suggested list, please note that current/active participants are the top priority for the Family Coach/Mentor program. This is due to the direct impact this population has on the Work Participation Rates.

Names of Best Practices:

Mentor Program
Family Coach Position

Description of Practices:

There are several areas to consider when determining what services would be best in your county. First, you will need to assess the needs of the participants in your county. This will allow you to select one or more practices that will best assist participants in gaining employment and achieving self-sufficiency. In addition, you will want to assess the resources currently available through DSS and Community Partners. This will allow you to provide needed services without duplicating what is already available. It will also promote collaborative opportunities within the community.

Collaboration is an important factor in the successful implementation of any practice. Fiscal considerations should include collaboration with all partners on funds available for project needs. Due to each program having their own Federal and State rules and regulations, you are encouraged to collaborate with all in-house partners to ensure that all parties are included in the development of new or enhanced practices.

Examples of Models for your reference:

Family Coach/Mentor Program Model #1:

A DSS staff member coordinates the Mentor Program, utilizing a partnership with the YWCA. The YWCA provides drop in childcare, meeting space, and kitchen facilities for monthly meetings. This program is comprised of current and former participants who have been successful in the Work First program. These

mentors agree to be matched with new participants that are unfamiliar with the program and who need extra support to obtain goals. The mentor program is included on the MRA Plan of Action for participants new to the Work First program and who do not have any identified employment connections. Participation in the mentor program is required for participants meeting this criterion, and sanctions are imposed if they do not participate. In addition to one-on-one participation, a testimonial DVD can be made by some of the mentors in this program, which can be used as part of the orientation process.

Family Coach/Mentor Program Model #2:

The Mentor Program runs over an eight- week period. DSS partners with an Adult Learning Center, which provides job readiness activities in addition to a mentoring program. During this program, the Work First participant regularly meets one-on-one with the mentor, who is provided by through the Adult Learning Center. It is the responsibility of a DSS staff member to explain the purpose of the Mentoring Program and the benefits involved. This is usually done either at application, review, or when completing a MRA Plan of Action. During the initial face-to-face meeting, the Work First participant discusses their goals concerning finding and retaining employment and becoming self-sufficient. All Work First participants involved in the program learn job readiness skills, budgeting skills, and how to dress successfully for a job interview.

While involved in the Mentoring Program, Work First participants receive weekly home visits from the DSS staff member assigned to their case. This visit provides the opportunity to address issues brought to their attention by the mentor. The Work First employment worker also reviews and updates the MRA Plan of Action to incorporate or include new goals or revisions. The mentor provides the Work First participant with information about job openings, job fairs, and any other job leads on a weekly basis.

The mentor attends monthly Work First Success Staffing meetings to discuss current participants or participants that have been involved in the Mentoring Program. The mentor also follows up with each Work First participant in the program for up to three months after services have terminated.

Upon conclusion of the Mentoring Program, for the participant not employed and with goals not met according to their specific plan, the Work First employment worker re-evaluates the goals and sets new attainable goals.

Family Coach/Mentor Program Model #3:

The county DSS collaborates with a local college to provide an intern from the Bachelor or Master of Social Work program. The intern then works with DSS as a Family Coach and receives a monthly monetary stipend to alleviate the need to find other employment.

The Family Coach works with the participant from their first visit with the Work First employment worker, making appropriate referrals, based on identified needs during this initial and on-going interaction.

The consistent contact by the Family Coach often builds rapport and enhances communication with the participant. In addition to offering services to active participants, the Family Coach provides some retention services with former Work First participants.

Services offered by the Work First Family Coach may include job readiness activities, assistance with transportation to employment related appointments and economic literacy. Home visits provide the Family Coach the opportunity to establish knowledge of the participant's needs in their own environment. The Family Coach identifies and addresses strengths, as well as areas where the participant and family need support. This allows the Family Coach to determine areas to concentrate on as a mentor to the participant.

Financial Projections:

The estimated cost per participant varies based on the type of model implemented and whether or not community collaboration is an option. Below are estimates for various scenarios:

Model #1:

1. Supplies - \$ 500.00 annually
2. Drop-in childcare services - \$3,000.00 annually

Model #2:

1. Mentor salary, facility costs, and program costs for partnership with community agency, such as an Adult Learning Center - \$2,400.00 monthly

Model #3:

1. Family Coach/Mentor salary through internship program - \$1,000.00 monthly

Demonstrating Counties:

1. Buncombe
2. Cleveland
3. Halifax
4. Jackson



Work First Best Practice Model Job Developer/Job Placement

Introduction:

The best practice of a Job Developer includes a variety of practices that have proven beneficial to the Work Participation Rates. Job Developers/Job Placement positions are designed to teach skills that will help a participant become employable, maintain a job, and provide support and advice. They also teach skills that will help the participant relate and interact with employers and co-workers. These practices include:

1. Job Search/Job Readiness
2. One-on-one job search as well as teaching participants how to job search independently
3. Resume Development
4. Interview Techniques
5. Vocational Testing
6. Job Referral
7. Transportation for job search/job interviews
8. Coordination of Childcare Services
9. Supportive follow-up services
10. Incentives

Population Served:

When implementing one or more of these practices in your county, the populations served may include the following groups:

1. Current/Active participants – top priority
2. Applicants/potential participants
3. Former participants
4. Non-custodial parents
5. Recipients of 200% Services

While this is a suggested list, please note that current/active participants are the top priority for receipt of this service. This is due to the direct impact this population has on the Work Participation Rates.

Names of Best Practices:

Job Developer
Job Club/Job Placement & Retention

Description of Practices:

There are several areas to consider when determining what services would be best in your county. First, you will need to assess the needs of the participants in your county. This will allow you to select one or more practices that will best assist participants in gaining employment and achieving self-sufficiency. In addition, you will want to assess the resources currently available through DSS and Community Partners. This will allow you to provide needed services without duplicating what is already available. It will also promote collaborative opportunities within the community.

Collaboration is an important factor in the successful implementation of any practice. Fiscal considerations should include collaboration with all partners on funds available for project needs. Due to each program having their own Federal and State rules and regulations, you are encouraged to collaborate with all in-house partners to ensure that all parties are included in the development of new or enhanced practices.

Examples of Models for your reference:

Job Developer/Job Placement Model #1:

The program offers Steps to Self Sufficiency Job Search class. This program has a Job Developer and a Steps Instructor. The purpose of this program is to provide training to participants on the skills necessary for seeking and keeping a job. The class lasts for three weeks. The participants meet and begin working with the Job Developer. Although there is an instructor for the class, the Job Developer assists the instructor by taping before and after interviews, as well as coaching participants on how to sell themselves to employers. After the mock interviews, the Job Developer matches the participants with potential employers. The participants are encouraged to make and keep a good working relationship so that the Job Developer can advocate for them with the employer.

If participants are unable to attend the class, they are referred to the Job Developer for one-on-one assistance.

Contact with the participants is open-ended, as they are welcome to come back any time to get assistance with finding employment.

The Job Developer provides follow-up services for up to a year following employment.

Job Developer/Job Placement Model #2:

The purpose of this program is to provide intensive one-on-one job search and employment classes for participants. The goal of the program is to increase their ability to get a job. This program also offers a 90-day job retention incentive to encourage Work First participants to remain with the same employer to improve their employment history. A Job Placement worker provides these services.

The Job Placement worker receives a referral explaining the participant's needs. The participant is required to attend one three hour structured job search class located on-site at DSS per week. Several Community College Human Resource Development programs provide an instructor to assist with the class. The Job Placement worker introduces the participant to the class, provides the formal instructions, and meets with each participant to provide job opportunities and guidance to overcoming employment barriers.

The Job Placement worker expands these services by assisting the participant one-on-one with editing applications and resumes, determining vocational interest, enhancing marketing skills and contacting employers. The Job Placement worker also accompanies the participant to the local Job Link Center to enhance the participant's ability to access local resources. They also transport participants to businesses to complete applications, to visit the local Job Link Centers, and to attend local job fairs. In addition, the Job Placement worker contacts employers directly as well as scans hard copies and on-line classifieds to locate jobs and then notifies the participant. The Job Placement worker provides constant follow-up and supportive services to current, former, non-custodial and 200% participants.

If a participant gains employment, the Job Placement worker is responsible for reviewing the wage verification form to determine if the participant will be employed 32 hours per week. If so, the participant receives a letter outlining the criteria to meet to receive a one-time \$300.00 incentive bonus. The criteria for receiving this bonus are as follows:

1. Send in payroll statement showing that the participant has been employed for 90 days consecutively with the same employer. The only exception to that rule would be if the participant changes employment for a substantial increase in pay with no gap in employment.
2. Work at least 32 hours per week
3. Provide feedback to Job Placement worker regarding job placement on a monthly basis after employment start date

Financial Projections:

The estimated cost per participant varies based on the type of practice implemented and whether or not Community Partnerships have been established.

Model #1:

1. Job Developer Salary - \$40,000.00 up to \$60,000.00 annually

Model #2:

1. Job Readiness Instructor Salary - up to \$1,300.00 monthly
2. Supplies - up to \$400.00 monthly
3. Incentives - up to \$10,000.00 annually

Demonstrating Counties:

1. Bladen
2. Buncombe
3. Chatham
4. Durham
5. Guilford
6. Johnston
7. Lenoir
8. Macon - Electing
9. Vance



Work First Best Practice Model

Transportation Assistance

Introduction:

The best practice of Transportation Assistance has demonstrated positive outcomes for Work First participants. These enhanced services provide necessary assistance which allows participants more consistency in meeting the requirements of the Work First program. They are also designed to assist in obtaining and retaining employment, as well as remaining off of the Work First program due to employment. Transportation Assistance may encompass various projects that have proven beneficial to the Work Participation Rates, including:

1. Vehicle ownership assistance
2. Enhanced mileage reimbursement
3. Gas cards or vouchers
4. Bus passes
5. Enhanced vehicle repair assistance
6. Driver's training and DMV collaboration, such as payment of past fines or tickets and assist in obtaining a driver's license

Population Served:

When implementing one or more of these practices in your county, the populations served may include the following groups:

1. Current/active participants – top priority
2. Applicants/potential participants
3. Former participants

While this is a suggested list, please note that current/active participants are the top priority for receipt of transportation assistance. This is due to the direct impact this population has on the Work Participation Rates.

Names of Best Practices:

Vehicle Purchase Assistance
Increased Mileage Reimbursement

Description of Practices:

There are several areas to consider when determining what services would be best in your county. First, you will need to assess the needs of the participants in your county. This will allow you to select one or more practices that will best assist participants in gaining employment and achieving self-sufficiency. In addition, you will want to assess the resources currently available through DSS and Community Partners. This will allow you to provide needed services without duplicating what is already available. It will also promote collaborative opportunities within the community.

Collaboration is an important factor in the successful implementation of any practice. Fiscal considerations should include collaboration with all partners on funds available for project needs. Due to each program having their own Federal and State rules and regulations, you are encouraged to collaborate with all in-house partners to ensure that all parties are included in the development of new or enhanced practices.

Guidelines:

1. Only paying for speeding tickets, minor traffic accidents, and expired license fees
2. Tickets or costs related to DWIs will not be paid
3. Tickets and fines over 12 months old and/or also multiple tickets will not be paid
4. Participant has to be fully cooperating with the employment program and count in the Numerator of the Participation Rate.

Financial Projections:

The estimated cost per participant varies based on the type of practice implemented and whether or not Community Partnerships are established.

Model #1:

1. Vehicle ownership assistance - \$4,000.00 - \$7,000.00 per participant

Model #2:

1. Enhanced mileage reimbursement - from 25 cents per mile up to the current IRS reimbursement rate
2. Driver's training and DMV collaboration - \$600.00 - \$800.00 per participant

Demonstrating Counties:

1. Alamance
2. Anson
3. Bladen
4. Buncombe
5. Cabarrus
6. Catawba
7. Chowan
8. Cleveland
9. Cumberland
10. Duplin
11. Henderson
12. Gaston
13. Lenoir
14. Mecklenburg
15. New Hanover
16. Northampton
17. Orange
18. Robeson
19. Rutherford
20. Sampson
21. Stokes
22. Union
23. Wake

Examples of Models for your reference:

Transportation Assistance Model #1:

The purpose of this best practice is to provide substantial financial assistance to help eligible Work First participants purchase affordable, reliable vehicles from reputable dealerships.

For example, eligible participants pay \$500.00 in cash toward the purchase of a vehicle from a dealership partner. Once the client pays his/her \$500.00, DSS, through the Work First program, will contribute up to \$4,500.00. In addition, the dealership will be asked to guarantee a minimum of \$500.00 trade-in value in cases where the client is upgrading an existing vehicle. This example will provide a potential maximum of \$5,500.00 toward the vehicle purchase. This example and the amounts shown are adjustable to meet the needs of the county.

Eligibility Criteria:

1. Applicant must be a Work First Participant in good standing.
2. Applicant must have a valid N.C. driver's license.
3. Applicant must be able to afford the estimated vehicle insurance coverage and operating expenses, including monthly payments if required.
4. Applicant must demonstrate a need for the vehicle (to retain employment, to seek new employment).
5. Applicant must attend an auto maintenance workshop.

Transportation Assistance Model #2:

The purpose of this best practice is to provide substantial financial assistance to eligible Work First participants who provide their own transportation and to assist participants to overcome barriers to transportation such as past fines.

Mileage reimbursement rates will increase across the board from 25 cents per mile to 50.5 cents per mile, or an amount of your choice, with the monthly cap increasing from \$200.00 to \$250.00.

The consequence of decisions made by some participants has left them without a valid driver's license, and the inability to pay the fines required obtaining one. County DSS agencies will pay past fines and/or tickets in order for participants to obtain a driver's license, providing the ability to drive to work.

Eligibility Criteria:

1. Participant is in compliance with their MRA Plan of Action, or meeting good cause criteria, and submitting hours timely
2. Participant in driver's training and Department of Motor Vehicle's (DMV) collaboration to obtain a driver's license

Work First Best Practices Model

Structured Job Search/Job Readiness

Introduction:

The best practice of providing Structured Job Search/Job Readiness activities has demonstrated positive outcomes for increasing Work Participation Rates. Structured Job Search/Job Readiness activities may be provided on-site at DSS or at other locations, with transportation provided. These structured activities are completed by DSS staff or through partnerships with staff from a community college, Employment Security Commission (ESC) or Job Link. Some of these activities include:

1. Developing resumes
2. Interviewing skills
3. Video taping mock interviews
4. Completing applications for employment
5. Dressing for success

Population Served:

When implementing one or more of these practices in your county, the populations served may include the following groups:

1. Current/active participants
2. Applicants/potential participants

If providing these activities for applicants, it is important to offer upfront supporting services in order to allow active participation.

Description of Practices:

There are several areas to consider when determining what services would be best in your county. First, you will need to assess the needs of the participants in your county. This will allow you to select one or more practices that will best assist participants in gaining employment and achieving self-sufficiency. In addition, you will want to assess the resources currently available through DSS and Community Partners. This will allow you to provide needed services without duplicating what is already available. It will also promote collaborative opportunities within the community.

Collaboration is an important factor in the successful implementation of any practice. Fiscal considerations should include collaboration with all partners on funds available for project needs. Due to each program having their own Federal and State rules and regulations, you are encouraged to collaborate with all in-house partners to ensure that all parties are included in the development of new or enhanced practices.

Names of Best Practices:

Employment Resource Lab
Work First Enrichment Class
Job Search/Job Readiness Class

Examples of Models for your reference:

Structured Job Search/Job Readiness Model #1:

This model includes the creation and use of an on-site Employment Resource Lab that Work First applicants can use. It is designed to assist with job readiness and job search, as well as provide individualized supervision for these activities prior to being approved for Work First. ESC (or another community partner agency) staffs the lab that contains multiple computer stations. Applicants who attend the lab may receive upfront services to assist with meeting participation requirements. Activities conducted in the lab include:

1. Develop a 35 hour a week MRA Plan of Action from date of application.
2. Provide participants with access to ESC job search resources (staffed by ESC).
3. Conduct an assessment of each applicant's marketable skills and abilities.
4. Assistance in resume preparation for each applicant.
5. Conduct an informal literacy assessment.
6. Identify specific job leads.
7. Assist with job interview appointments.
8. Follow up to ensure that the applicant attended job interviews.
9. Provide First Stop registration for potential applicants.

Referrals for applicants to attend the lab can begin as early as the next business day following the signing of the MRA Plan of Action. Following the signing of the MRA Plan of Action and assessment by the Work First employment worker, the applicant is assigned a childcare worker to obtain vouchers, if needed. If locating a childcare facility is an issue, the applicant will start the lab within a week of signing the MRA Plan of Action. The on-site lab at DSS operates on two shifts – 8:30-12pm and 12pm -3:30 pm. This allows each customer to receive attention. Customers then use the other 3.5 hours of the seven-hour day for directed job search in the community. DSS staff receives attendance reports from the ESC staff.

On-going participants may also use the lab if employment was not obtained prior to application approval.

Structured Job Search/Job Readiness Model #2:

This model details a 12-week comprehensive Work First Enrichment class.

The Work First Enrichment class is a 12-week comprehensive job readiness and enrichment program that provides a hands-on learning environment for participants. The class is essentially a place of employment that participants attend Monday through Friday during work hours. Appropriate work attire and professional behavior is expected from each participant. The class is incorporates four components:

1. Immediate engagement
2. "No excuses" atmosphere
3. Significant rewards for accomplishment
4. Driven and committed staff

These components work together to empower participants in the class to take control of their lives and make changes required to gain lasting employment. The Enrichment Class curriculum is very extensive and, as a result, participants leave the class with a high level of confidence in their abilities.

The class begins with life-skills training that establish the foundation for the rest of the course. Two weeks of work experience training in addition to supplemental in-class sessions allow participants to make mistakes in a worry-free environment. The work experience sessions are divided to allow time for feedback and work improvement. There are three weeks of life-skill training followed by one week of work experience. Participants then attend three weeks of employability training followed by one week of work experience. The class ends after another four weeks of employability training. A major part of what makes the class unique is the way in which encouragement is provided to participants in addition to the training, education and support.

Transportation assistance and an incentive program are designed to increase motivation. Transportation assistance is provided throughout the class and may be a major factor in successful attendance for many participants. Incentives are awarded to participants when milestones are achieved or outstanding work is done.

Structured Job Search/Job Readiness Model #3:

This model details a four-week job search/job readiness class conducted through DSS and various Community Partners.

The class is a four-week job readiness/assisted job search class held Monday through Friday from 9am-12:00pm. Classes are at the DSS and at the Career Plus Center or ESC office. Participants who enroll in this class also work with the local Community College in an effort to determine their employability and basic skill level.

All participants are required to dress appropriately for the class. Participants are engaged in a variety of activities in the class including personality inventories, skills assessment, aptitude inventories, mock interviews, resume development, communication, teamwork, and job application completion. In addition, attitude and interpersonal relationships are two major focus areas during the four weeks of instruction.

Participants find opportunities to secure mentors throughout the program, develop support systems and network with employers as well as each other to secure employment opportunities. All participants completing the course receive a certificate of completion and in many cases obtain full or part-time employment. Participants receive incentives when milestones are achieved or outstanding work is demonstrated. Participants also enroll in the Career Readiness Certification program through the local community college and continue this effort well after the four-week course has ended.

Financial Projections:

The estimated cost per participant varies based on the type of practice implemented and the establishment of Community Partnerships.

Model #1:

1. Upfront Services - \$360.00 per participant not including cost of childcare
2. Upfront Services - \$515.00 per participant including the cost of childcare

Model #2:

1. Enrichment Class (based on 80 participants – 20 per class) - \$1,875.00 per participant annually
2. One time purchase of vehicle to support the program – \$21,000.00
3. Food Stipend for Participants- estimated \$3,000.00 annually
4. Job Readiness/Interview Clothes \$100.00 per participant annually

5. Contracted County Vehicle for OPT Transportation mileage only - \$9,000.00 annually
6. Driver for contracted vehicle @ \$10.12 per hr - \$1,619.20 monthly
7. Internal Job Coach (Work First Enrichment Program) @ \$10.12 hr - \$1,619.20 monthly
8. Transportation Reimbursement for Participants Providing Own Vehicle @ 50.5 cents per mile (304,891 miles) - \$15,397.04
9. Incentive Program:
 - a. Gas Cards (estimated 90 @ \$50.00 each) - \$4,500.00 annually
 - b. Quarterly Job Interview Attire prior to graduation - \$1,200.00 annually
10. Contracted Instructor through partnership with the local community college – No cost
11. Financial Counseling - seven-hour course @ \$175.00 per participant plus \$25.00 budget book
12. Dispute Settlement - \$13,298.00 annually
13. Job Coach (Community Employers) Salary - \$38,000.00 annually
14. Cooperative Extension Nutrition Food Cost - \$643.66 annually
15. Supplies - \$10,000.00 annually

Model #3:

1. Classroom Cost - The Community College waived any fees related to participation in the Key Train lab and has offered scholarships for each Career Readiness Certification test taken by a Work First participant who attended the Key Train lab. The Community College donated the use of facilities to house classroom activities for DSS participants – No cost
2. Materials including supplies, educational materials, handouts and promotional items) - Estimated
3. @ \$10.00 per participant
4. Refreshments - Estimated @ \$1.50 per day for 21 days - \$32.00 per participant
5. Materials including supplies, educational materials, handouts, promotional items – Estimated @ \$10.00 per participant
6. Transportation - Estimated cost at \$100.00 per participant
7. Incentives - Estimated costs @ \$50.00 per participant
8. Clothing - Varies greatly, many times donated items are used. Through this process partnerships were developed with a local church providing assistance with clothing and professional attire for many participants. However, for those needing additional appropriate clothing for seeking employment, a clothing allowance is allowed – Up to \$125.00 per participant. Estimated average costs equal less than \$75.00 per person
9. Childcare - \$375.00 per month per child

Demonstrating Counties:

1. Cabarrus
2. Carteret
3. Forsyth
4. Haywood
5. Lenoir
6. Nash
7. Northampton
8. Orange
9. Stokes
10. Vance
11. Wake
12. Wilson

Work First Best Practice Model

Upfront Services

Introduction:

The best practice of providing Upfront Services to applicants has demonstrated positive outcomes in assisting applicants to gaining employment and/or increasing work participation rates. This practice includes providing supportive services to applicants, either all applicants or only work-ready applicants, in order for them to begin participating in countable work components prior to application approval. Upfront Services may encompass various supportive services that have proven beneficial to Work First applicants, including:

1. Childcare assistance
2. Transportation assistance
3. Job readiness activities
4. Other pre-employment activities, as appropriate

Population Served:

When implementing one or more of these practices in your county, the populations served may include the following groups:

1. All applicants
2. Work-ready applicants only

Names of Best Practices:

Upfront Services

Description of Practices:

There are several areas to consider when determining what services would be best in your county. First, you will need to assess the needs of the participants in your county. This will allow you to select one or more practices that will best assist participants in gaining employment and achieving self-sufficiency. In addition, you will want to assess the resources currently available through DSS and Community Partners. This will allow you to provide needed services without duplicating what is already available. It will also promote collaborative opportunities within the community.

Collaboration is an important factor in the successful implementation of any practice. Fiscal considerations should include collaboration with all partners on funds available for project needs. Due to each program having their own Federal and State rules and regulations, you are encouraged to collaborate with all in-house partners to ensure that all parties are included in the development of new or enhanced practices.

Examples of Models for your reference:

Upfront Services Model #1:

The Work First Program assesses every applicant for Upfront Services during the application process. The applicant receives the offer of Upfront Services, if the following conditions apply during the period prior to determination of eligibility for Work First cash benefits:

1. Actively seeking employment
2. Participating in Job Readiness activities
3. Participating in an Alternative Work Experience program

Initially, the offer of Upfront Services is for no more than 30 days from the date of application.

Upfront Services and the activities that accompany them are included in the MRA Plan of Action completed at application. The schedule is for the client to meet with their Work First employment worker no less than ten working days from the application date to determine if any additional Upfront Services needs and to review the MRA Plan of Action.

It is possible to extend Upfront Services for an additional 30-day period if warranted. Extend services only if the application is pending and the client continues to participate in activities as described in their MRA Plan of Action. Upfront Services are never authorized for more than 60 days from the date of application.

After the initial assessment and authorization of Upfront Services through intake, these services can be modified or amended at any time prior to the approval of the WFFA application. The Work First cash worker or the Work First employment worker can initiate these modifications. The MRA Plan of Action signed/updated by the applicant must reflect these modifications.

Pending applications are monitored no less than every two weeks by the Work First employment worker. Depending on the situation, the applicant may be required to have face-to-face contact each week until the approval of the application.

Upfront Services Model #2:

Schedule all persons who want to apply for Work First for an Orientation session as the first step to an application. The potential applicant must register for First Stop prior to Orientation. At Orientation, Work First employment workers use PowerPoint presentation to describe the basic eligibility criteria for Work First Cash Assistance and the requirements for Employment Services. Upon successful completion of Orientation, the customer is given times to return to make the application. During the application, the Work First employment worker also sees the applicant and has them sign a MRA Plan of Action for a 35 hour per week plan. This includes job readiness activities and the following supportive services:

1. Childcare assistance
2. On-site lab or off-site facility that works individually with applicants with access to ESC-job search resources
3. Assessment of each applicant's marketable skills and abilities
4. Resume preparation for each applicant
5. Informal literacy assessment
6. Identification of specific job leads
7. Assistance with job interview appointments
8. Checking behind the applicant and making sure they attended the job interview
9. Transportation assistance

Following the signing of the MRA Plan of Action and assessment by the worker, the applicant is assigned a childcare worker to obtain vouchers. If locating a childcare facility is an issue, the applicant will usually start job search/readiness activities within a week of signing the MRA Plan of Action. DSS staff receives attendance reports to verify participation and on-going need for Upfront Services. Once approved and the participant has not become employed, a new MRA Plan of Action is signed for Job Search/Job Readiness services as an on-going participant.

Upfront Services Model #3:

The Work First cash worker completes the application process and the applicant signs a MRA which establishes the following timeline for completion:

1. Registration for First Stop within 12 days,
2. Attend orientation with two possible dates within a seven-day timeframe and a referral to childcare. If the applicant fails to attend either of the two sessions, the Work First cash worker will deny the application.
3. During Work First Employment Services orientation an initial assessment is conducted and an MRA Plan of Action is developed placing the applicant in an approved activity within seven days.

After orientation, applicants meet with a Work First employment worker for further assessment and development of a revised MRA Plan of Action. The Work First employment worker notifies the Work First cash worker that the applicant attended an orientation session. Staff addresses barriers to participation and determines if an applicant is job ready, in need of job readiness skills, or seeking medical accommodation.

After this assessment is complete, the identified applicants (job ready and in need of job readiness skills) for job readiness class are referred to a pre-briefing/course expectation meeting. A Work First employment worker refers participants with medical accommodations for intensive case management services. They also attend a quarterly information meeting with a panel of professionals on disability.

The Work First employment worker makes a referral to childcare and transportation. Childcare providers are identified and transportation is provided. These activities occur while the Work First application is pending. Applicants are placed in a work activity within seven days from date of application.

Financial Projections:

The estimated cost per participant varies based on the type of practice implemented and the establishment of Community Partnerships.

Model #1:

1. Childcare - \$696.00 average cost per participant

Model #2:

1. Childcare and transportation - \$905.00 - \$1,056.00 average cost per participant.
2. Job Readiness contract, if needed, is not included in these estimates.

Demonstrating Counties:

1. Forsyth
2. Gaston
3. Orange



Work First Best Practice Model

On-The-Job Training/Subsidized Employment

Introduction:

The best practice of On-The-Job Training (OJT) /Subsidized Employment includes a variety of practices that have proven beneficial to the Work Participation Rates. This includes, but is not limited to the development or enhancement of partnerships with other community agencies to access OJT employment opportunities for Work First participants. This practice may also involve the development of an OJT program operated by the DSS directly in partnership with employers within the business community through contracts. This practice allows participants with little or no employment history the opportunity to gain employment experience. These practices may include:

1. Vocational Training
2. Skills Training
3. Interviewing Skills
4. Transportation
5. Childcare
6. Other Supportive Services

Population Served:

When implementing one or more of these practices in your county, the populations served may include the following groups:

1. Current/Active participants – top priority
2. Applicants/potential participants

While this is a suggested list, please note that current/active participants are the top priority for receipt of this service. This is due to the direct impact this population has on the Work Participation Rates.

Names of Best Practices:

On-The-Job Training/Subsidized Employment

Description of Practices:

There are several areas to consider when determining what services would be best in your county. First, you will need to assess the needs of the participants in your county. This will allow you to select one or more practices that will best assist participants in gaining employment and achieving self-sufficiency. In addition, you will want to assess the resources currently available through DSS and Community Partners. This will allow you to provide needed services without duplicating what is already available. It will also promote collaborative opportunities within the community.

Collaboration is an important factor in the successful implementation of any practice. Fiscal considerations should include collaboration with all partners on funds available for project needs. Due to each program having their own Federal and State rules and regulations, you are encouraged to collaborate with all in-house partners to ensure that all parties are included in the development of new or enhanced practices.

Examples of Models for your reference:

On-The-Job Training/Subsidized Employment Model #1:

This model is a collaborative effort between the DSS and the local ESC, contractor for OJT. Work First participants are evaluated to determine their level of employment capability. If the participant is job ready, the Work First employment worker verifies whether they have previously used Job Bonus. If they have not used Job Bonus, they are referred to ESC. The ESC representative schedules an appointment with the participant to evaluate job readiness and what employment is best suited, then negotiation with employers begins. Once an OJT placement is made, DSS pays 100% of the participant's salary/benefits for up to three months. DSS pays up to \$8.00 per hour for qualified participants. At the conclusion of the three months, the expectation is that the employer hires the participant permanently.

On-The-Job Training/Subsidized Employment Model #2:

This model represents an OJT program operated directly by the DSS through contracts with employers. Each participant must complete the Work Keys Training program offered through the local community college and earn at least a silver level Career Readiness Certification, which indicates the participant has the skills needed for approximately 65% of jobs. The participant is required to complete the Work Keys Certification classes for four days in addition to a Financial Literacy class also offered by the local community college. The Work First employment worker discusses potential placement options with the participant. The Work First employment worker offers the participant the opportunity to interview with the potential employer that interests them. The employer must grant approval for the placement of a participant at the business. The DSS has contracts with multiple businesses with each representing a different type of employment setting from industrial to care providers. The Work First employment worker monitors progress weekly through site visits, which allow the worker to identify and address any problems that may occur. Each participant begins earning wages averaging \$8.00 per hour from the first day of training. Each participant is evaluated for Job Bonus. OJT placements may last up to three months with DSS reimbursing the employer for 100% of wages for an average of \$8.00 per hour for 30 hours average per week. Upon successful completion of the training hours and attainment of the skills needed for permanent employment, the employer hires the participant. Transportation services may continue up to 30 days after the participant exits the OJT program.

On-The-Job Training/Subsidized Employment Model #3:

This model represents a partnership with the local ESC to provide OJT/subsidized employment placements to participants who have no outstanding barriers to employment. The Work First employment worker contacts the representative at the ESC to obtain an

appointment for the participant. The participant's MRA Plan of Action is updated to reflect this appointment. A referral form is also emailed to the ESC representative confirming the appointment and providing required information about the participant. During the appointment with the participant, ESC searches their database of contracted employers to locate job openings and arrange for an interview for the participant. If selected for employment, the employer signs a contract with ESC for the placement. The ESC representative is responsible for obtaining attendance sheets and tracking employment hours, which are shared with the Work First employment worker. Participants may be in an OJT placement for six months if their work performance is satisfactory. DSS pays for 50% of a participant's salary up to a maximum of \$5.00/hour.

Another example follows this same practice with the addition of having a Job Developer/Job Coach employed by DSS co-located at ESC that partners to find employers as well as contacting employers in person and by phone to recruit OJT contracts for participants. The Job Developer/Job Coach also conducts weekly site visits to ensure that the participant is doing well on the job and pick up attendance sheets. The employer is aware these visits will be conducted and determines the best time to complete them. Employers are made aware that if they have concerns, the Job Developer/Job Coach acts as a liaison counseling the OJT participant as needed.

Financial Projections:

Model #1:

1. Salary/benefits @ \$8.00/hour/40 hours per week for three months - \$4,156.80 per participant for three months

Model #2:

1. \$1,777.00 monthly, including the following:
 - a. Salary - \$8.00/hour/30 hours weekly
 - b. Transportation - \$80.00 weekly or \$347.00 monthly
 - c. Childcare - \$90.00 weekly (per preschool aged child) based on one child - \$390.00 monthly

Model #3:

1. Salary up to six months (Salary up to 50% up to a maximum of \$5.00/hour. Average wages are \$8.50 per hour/40 hours per week = \$340.00 x 26 weeks = \$8,840.00 x 50% - Averages \$4,420.00 per participant

Demonstrating Counties:

1. Bladen
2. Cumberland
3. Duplin
4. Guilford
5. Orange
6. Richmond
7. Robeson
8. Sampson
8. Sampson
9. Scotland

Work First Best Practice Model Enhanced Community Partnerships

Introduction:

The best practice of Enhanced Community Partnerships includes a variety of practices that have proven beneficial to the Work Participation Rates. DSS agencies partner with community-based agencies, businesses and industries. These practices include:

1. Collaboration between Community Partners towards a specific goal
2. DSS Managers and Supervisors serve on various boards
3. DSS staff participate in community activities
4. Networking
5. Marketing program
6. Development of a Work First website
7. Participation in job fairs, business expos, resource fairs and Chamber of Commerce events

Population Served:

When implementing one or more of these practices in your county, the populations served may include the following groups:

1. Current/Active participants – top priority
2. Applicants/Potential participants

While this is a suggested list, please note that current/active participants are the top priority for receipt of this service. This is due to the direct impact this population has on the Work Participation Rates.

Names of Best Practices:

Enhanced Community Partnerships
Pathways to Employment
Network of Support

Description of Practices:

There are several areas to consider when determining what services would be best in your county. First, you will need to assess the needs of the participants in your county. This will allow you to select one or more practices that will best assist participants in gaining employment and achieving self-sufficiency. In addition, you will want to assess the resources currently available through DSS and Community Partners. This will allow you to provide needed services without duplicating what is already available. It will also promote collaborative opportunities within the community.

Collaboration is an important factor in the successful implementation of any practice. Fiscal considerations should include collaboration with all partners on funds available for project needs. Due to each program having their own Federal and State rules and regulations, you are encouraged to collaborate with all in-house partners to ensure that all parties are included in the development of new or enhanced practices.

Examples of Models for your reference:

Enhanced Community Partnership Model #1:

This model utilizes involvement of DSS staff through taking an active role in the community through churches, civic groups and charity organizations. The agency has developed relationships that increase collaboration with businesses and other agencies throughout the community. Work First managers and supervisory staff serve on boards, committees and volunteer organizations. Work First partners closely with Job Link, the local community college, ESC, Literacy Council, Chamber of Commerce, Cooperative Extension, domestic violence agency, Christian Clothing Closet, Community Support Center, faith-based organizations, Housing Authority, Workforce Development and a host of other agencies. This process can be time consuming, but the cost is minimal and the benefits are great.

This program also uses marketing of the Work First program through a brochure highlighting the Work First program. The marketing program purchases promotional items, business cards and develops a website. The Work First program participates in community events such as job fairs, business expos, resource fairs and Chamber of Commerce events, such as Business after Hours. These networking opportunities allow the agency to develop contacts and resources for their families. It also increases the visibility of the Work First program in the community. A primary benefit is an increase in the number of Alternative Work Experience sites, and employment opportunities increase markedly. Employers now call DSS for assistance when they have an employment opening. This project can change the community's view of Work First from a hindrance to the community to a resource.

Enhanced Community Partnership Model #2:

This model is a collaborative effort among Community Partners designed to provide non-duplicated services to Work First recipients, emphasize a common goal for the recipient and provide assistance achieving the common goal while providing countable work activities for the recipient. This project accomplishes this while fostering better communication between programs and agencies. To begin, the Work First employment worker conducts an assessment of the participant either at intake or ongoing reassessment to determine strengths and needs and to identify stressors that could lead to child abuse and/or neglect. Utilizing a screening tool developed by a professor at Western Carolina University, the worker collects the information from the interview and the screening tool to develop a self-sufficiency plan. The plan is outlined on the "Self-Sufficiency Individual Plan" tool developed by the Community Partners. The Work First employment worker schedules an appointment with the Job Developer at ESC who is provided a copy of the plan. The Job Developer shares/staffs the plan with Community Partners. The participant meets with the Job Developer and is immediately placed into contact with the component providers. Subsequent meetings are scheduled with the Job Developer and Community Partners with

the dates shared with the Work First employment worker. Feedback is provided between all parties utilizing meetings and observations recorded on the plan. The Work First employment worker, Job Developer and/or Community Partner shares progress weekly at Work First staff meetings. Therefore, everyone has the same information pertaining to the case if it can be shared based on confidentiality. Attendance sheets and reporting is a collaborative effort between the participant, Community Partners and Work First.

Enhanced Community Partnership Model #3:

This model is a collaborative effort among Community Partners facilitated by a Job Developer employed by the DSS. Applicants are assessed for job readiness and referrals are made as necessary to agencies within the “Network of Support.” Vocational Rehabilitation provides vocational counseling based on training needs and necessary skills improvement in addition to identifying abilities. The ESC provides oversight for structured job search and job placement. The ESC also helps identify and address barriers related to obtaining and retaining employment. The local community college provides short-term training such as Certified Nursing Assistant and Medical Technician. Supportive services such as transportation are provided to support activities. The Job Developer works as a liaison between the DSS and the “Network of Support.” This liaison occurs through site visits and constant communication with employers, DSS staff and Community Partners.

Financial Projections:

Model #1:

1. Marketing Materials - \$6,400.00 annually

Model #2:

1. Expenses of one Job Developer contracted through ESC – Averages \$185.43 per participant

Model #3:

1. Training Costs - Averages \$60.00 - \$200.00 per participant
2. Transportation – Averages \$900.00 - \$2,100.00 monthly

Demonstrating Counties:

1. Catawba
2. Cleveland
3. Duplin
4. Haywood
5. Jackson
6. Person
7. Richmond
8. Scotland
9. Warren

Work First Best Practice Model Enhanced Work Experience

Introduction:

The best practice of Work Experience includes a variety of practices that have proven beneficial to the Work Participation Rates. DSS agencies partner with community-based agencies, businesses and industries in the development of Alternative Work Experience sites where Work First participants gain valuable job skills needed for permanent employment. These practices include:

1. Development of a variety of Work Experience sites.
2. Collaboration with service providers and business Community Partners towards a specific goal.
3. Participant progress is closely monitored by DSS staff and Work Experience sites.
4. Recognition of disabling conditions need for skill enhancement or attitude issues that create barriers to employment.
5. Increasing self esteem of participant through positive work environment and reinforcement.
6. Participant incentives for meeting work experience goals.
7. Participant will have the opportunity to become familiar with the work environment and gain needed skills and work history.

Population Served:

When implementing one or more of these practices in your county, the populations served may include the following groups:

1. Current/Active participants – top priority
2. Applicants/Potential participants

While this is a suggested list, please note that current/active participants are the top priority for receipt of this service. This is due to the direct impact this population has on the Work Participation Rates.

Names of Best Practices:

Vocational Incentive Partnership (V.I.P.) Program
The Work Experience Project
Enhanced Work Experience Program

Description of Practices:

There are several areas to consider when determining what services would be best in your county. First, you will need to assess the needs of the participants in your county. This will allow you to select one or more practices that will best assist participants in gaining employment and achieving self-sufficiency. In addition, you will want to assess the resources

currently available through DSS and Community Partners. This will allow you to provide needed services without duplicating what is already available. It will also promote collaborative opportunities within the community.

Collaboration is an important factor in the successful implementation of any practice. Fiscal considerations should include collaboration with all partners on funds available for project needs. Due to each program having their own Federal and State rules and regulations, you are encouraged to collaborate with all in-house partners to ensure that all parties are included in the development of new or enhanced practices.

Examples of Models for your reference:

Enhanced Work Experience Model #1:

This model is a short-term, 12-week work experience training program designed to encourage work experience, enhance self esteem/self worth, and increase the confidence of Work First participants who suffer from health or physical challenges or who have limited work experience. DSS contracts with a community rehabilitation program to conduct a Vocational Evaluation on participants. This rehabilitation program also serves as the work experience site. A Program Manager from the rehabilitation program is available to work with participants providing orientation, safety education, instruction on task/work training opportunities and an overall evaluation of participant's skills, attitude, behavior, willingness, efficiency, etc. Work Experience training includes introduction to skills such as sorting, filing, packaging, weighing, office assistance, housekeeping, assembling, material handling and mailing.

A Situational Work Assessment is an observation of a participant's work habits, attitude, cooperation, teamwork, work performance, skill level and quality of work. DSS has contracted for this service.

An enhanced Work Experience Incentive is provided weekly to participants who successfully complete their Work Experience hours. The amount of the incentive is \$50.00 per week.

The Work First employment worker and the Program Manager from the rehabilitation program work closely together.

Enhanced Work Experience Model #2:

This model primarily serves the incapacitated, or "F" code, participants and other active participants that are work eligible. Activities include Psychological/Vocational Evaluation by a licensed Psychologist, intensive Job Seeking Skills and Readiness Training and transportation provided by the Work First employment worker and Human Resources Development and Placement Specialist (HRDP). The HRDP meets with the participant weekly at the jobsite and discusses immediate problems found in the participant's job performance including punctuality, motivation, interaction with co-workers and supervisors, productivity and any other difficulty that the supervisor identifies as an issue.

Enhanced Work Experience Model #3:

For this model, the participant begins in a work experience component on the date of application. Work Experience is a component in which the Work First employment worker strives to gain buy-in from the participant. The Work First employment worker will conduct site visits weekly to monitor and communicate with the supervisor of the site. Problems are identified quickly and worked through, when possible. Participants who complete their required hours will receive an incentive for the essential needs of the family. Incentives are issued after the month of participation. Fifty percent of the employment services caseload is in the work experience component.

Financial Projections:

Model #1:

1. Vocational Evaluations for 10 participants - \$4,600.00 annually
2. Incentives - \$50.00 weekly for each participant who completed the required hours of work experience.

Model #2:

1. Situation work assessments for 20 participants - \$6,000.00 annually
2. Incentives for each participant who completes the required hours of work experience - \$50.00 monthly

Model #3:

1. Incentives – Averages \$200.00 monthly per participant.

Demonstrating Counties:

1. Chatham
2. Durham
3. Hertford
4. Mecklenburg
5. Nash
6. New Hanover
7. Person
8. Rutherford
9. Wilson



Work First Best Practice Model Participant Incentives

Introduction:

The best practice of Participant Incentives has demonstrated positive outcomes for Work First participants. The enhanced services offer immediate feedback, encouragement and recognition of high performance for participant's efforts on the path to employment and self-sufficiency. Participants have to meet certain criteria in order to receive incentives. This best practice has proven beneficial to the Work Participation Rates. These practices include:

1. Gift cards, clothing, gas cards or cash/check provided for obtaining and maintaining employment and/or completing required work participation hours.
2. Incentives are to be used for employment related expenditures or to provide essential needs of the family.

Population Served:

When implementing one or more of these practices in your county, the populations served may include the following groups:

1. Current/Active participants – top priority
2. Applicants/Potential participants

While this is a suggested list, please note that current/active participants are the top priority for receipt of this service. This is due to the direct impact this population has on the Work Participation Rates.

Names of Best Practices:

Work First Employment Incentive Program
Offering Incentives to Active Participants

Description of Practices:

There are several areas to consider when determining what services would be best in your county. First, you will need to assess the needs of the participants in your county. This will allow you to select one or more practices that will best assist participants in gaining employment and achieving self-sufficiency. In addition, you will want to assess the resources currently available through DSS and Community Partners. This will allow you to provide needed services without duplicating what is already available. It will also promote collaborative opportunities within the community.

Collaboration is an important factor in the successful implementation of any practice. Fiscal considerations should include collaboration with all partners on funds available for project needs. Due to each program having their own Federal and State rules and regulations, you

are encouraged to collaborate with all in-house partners to ensure that all parties are included in the development of new or enhanced practices.

Examples of Models for your reference:

Note: The amounts listed in the below models are examples and may vary based on funding availability.

Participant Incentive Model #1:

This model establishes the following criteria that participants must meet to be eligible for incentives.

1. Successful completion of perfect attendance at school, work experience, budgeting classes, etc.
 - a. Offered on a month-to-month basis.
 - b. Incentive type: Gas gift card valued at \$60.00
2. Successful completion of GED/High School Diploma
 - a. Incentive type: \$200.00 gift card.
3. Successfully obtained employment.
 - a. Offered only one time per year
 - b. Incentive type: \$200.00 gift card for clothing.
4. Successful attended bi-weekly “check-in” meetings with Work First employment worker.
 - a. Offered as funds are available.
 - b. Incentive type: \$20.00 gift card

This model serves participants with active Work First codes of “B” and “L.” Participants are eligible after Work First employment workers verify achievements.

Participant Incentive Model #2:

This model establishes the following criteria that participants must meet to be eligible for incentives.

1. Successful active participation in at least one of the following Work First components:
 - a. Employment
 - b. Work Experience
 - c. Community Service
 - d. On-the-Job Training.
2. Participant must count in the Numerator of the Participation Rate to receive the incentive.
3. Incentive type: \$50.00 gift card

Participant Incentive Model #3:

This model establishes the following criteria that participants must meet to be eligible for incentives.

1. Successful completion of a qualified GED program within six months of enrollment.
 - a. Incentive type: \$100.00 stipend
2. Successful completion of a Certificate program from a community college or accredited apprentice program.
 - a. Incentive type: \$150.00 stipend
3. Successful completion of Associate's Degree
 - a. Incentive type: \$200.00 stipend
4. Counting in the Numerator of the Participation Rate
 - a. Incentive type: \$50.00 stipend designated for clothing or essential needs of the family
 - b. Offered on a monthly basis

Compliance is verified monthly by home or site visit. The Work First employment worker and the participant sign a new MRA Plan of Action monthly.

Financial Projections:

Model #1:

1. Gift cards for thirty-two participants totaling from \$20.00 to \$340.00 – Average of \$156.25 per participant annually as follows:
 - a. Ten received under \$100.00
 - b. Four received \$100.00 or more
 - c. Fifteen received \$200.00 or more
 - d. Two received \$300.00
 - e. One received over \$300.00

Model #2:

1. Incentives for participants who successfully completed required hours in designated work components - \$50.00 per participant monthly

Model #3:

1. Incentives (Actual from July 2008 through March 2009: Three hundred and ninety four (394) gift cards times \$50.00 - \$19,700.00 - Average cost per participant at the rate of \$50.00 per month for being counted in the Numerator is \$550.00.
2. Certificate Program for one year - Estimated cost is \$450.00 (\$400.00 for Associates Degree)

Demonstrating Counties:

1. Buncombe
2. Caldwell
3. Carteret
4. Catawba
5. Chatham

6. Cleveland
7. Duplin
8. Durham
9. Harnett
10. Johnston
11. Nash
12. Northampton
13. Orange
14. Robeson
15. Sampson
16. Scotland
17. Union
- 18. Wake**



Fiscal Considerations and Guidance

Documentation must be available for all expenditures that are reported for Federal and State fund participation. All costs charged to Federal or State funds are subject to the policies and procedures outlined in the DHHS Division of Social Services' Fiscal Manual, the N.C. State Compliance Supplements - Cross Cutting Requirements, the Local Government Fiscal Control Act, and all other related audits, monitoring and reviews.

In particular, with the proposed Work First Best Practice Models, counties must follow established rules and regulations for segregation of duties between employees responsible for contracting, accounts payable, and issuance/disbursement of incentive stipends or gift cards. In addition, any organization that receives Federal or State financial assistance from a State agency is called a "sub recipient". Counties, as sub recipients of the State, must develop monitoring procedures to ensure that any sub recipients with whom they may contract to provide services and counties must follow all minimum standard contracting requirements and spend funds appropriately. Find County contracting requirements and guidance can be found at the following web address: <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/budget/contracts.htm>.

In addition, based on certain program regulations, counties are to include cash incentives/stipends as unearned income or as a resource in benefit calculations entered into the Eligibility Information System if required by the applicable program.



Summary

The Division of Social Services is proud of the innovation and best practices demonstrated by North Carolina counties participating in the Work First Demonstration Grants. The Division is grateful to those counties who demonstrated ideas into action to prove what worked, what did not and what would have the greatest impact on North Carolina. Appreciation also extends to other counties, Electing and Standard, whose ideas were often building blocks for Best Practices. The Division extends its deepest appreciation to the North Carolina General Assembly for allocating funds specifically targeting the objectives:

1. Increasing the individual counties' Work Participation Rates
2. Strengthening county and Community Partnerships
3. Identifying Work First strategies that could be adopted by all counties that would result in an increased State Participation Rate

The Work First Demonstration Grant project has clearly proven that by identifying and implementing specific strategies the State can positively impact the Work Participation Rate. At a time when North Carolina, most states and counties are struggling with unprecedented budgeting and revenue issues, our participation rates in our Best Practice counties continue to improve or decline more slowly. The TANF Block Grant funds many programs beyond Work First. Making the participation rates sustains this revenue. The TANF Block Grant is largely used for services to families involved in Children's Protective Services and day care. In our present economy, the numbers of those families, as well as Work First families are increasing. Implementation of these Best Practices can assist counties in maximizing their participation rates.

Counties continue to be engaged in creative approaches and strategies that, when evaluated, have shown their potential to impact participation rates statewide. Many counties have effectively improved collaboration with their community, county, and State, creating partnerships which will continue to prosper for families in need. As our collective resources decline, our collaborations will provide much needed cooperation for our citizens.

Counties have successfully identified strategies that have the most potential to impact our State Work First Participation Rate. The Functional Capacity Evaluations/Vocational Assessments and the Work First Benefits (WFB) strategies have shown the greatest impact on the Work Participation Rate. The Division of Social Services implemented both strategies statewide. The Functional Assessment Strategy funding began for the first time for SFY 2008-2009 and funding continues in SFY 2009-2010. This project gave focus to incapacitated participants that may be the hardest to serve due to their barriers. The General Assembly approved the WFB Demonstration Grant project (also known as Pay-After-Performance) and its implementation in SFY 2009-2010. Demonstration and electing counties successfully implemented WFB. This project, Work First Benefits, will have little expense relative to the desired result of preservation and achievement of the work participation rates while moving more families toward self-sufficiency. The focus of this project is to issue benefits to participants after completing program requirements. As of

October 2009, this project was implemented statewide, which will further affect our ability to continue to generate funds used in many programs while avoiding financial penalties.

The North Carolina Work First Demonstration Grant project continues to live through the knowledge that we have gained through these Best Practices.



Appendix A – All Demonstration Grant Counties

First Year 2006-2007	Second Year 2007-2008	Third Year 2008-2009
Alamance	Alamance	Alamance
Bladen	Anson	Anson
Buncombe	Bladen	Bladen
Burke	Buncombe	Buncombe
Cabarrus	Burke	Burke
Catawba	Cabarrus	Cabarrus
Chatham	Caldwell	Caldwell
Cleveland	Carteret	Carteret
Cumberland	Catawba	Catawba
Durham	Chatham	Chatham
Forsyth	Chowan	Cleveland
Franklin	Cleveland	Cumberland
Gaston	Cumberland	Davidson
Guilford	Davidson	Duplin
Halifax	Duplin	Durham
Harnett	Durham	Forsyth
Haywood	Edgecombe	Gaston
Johnston	Forsyth	Guilford
Mecklenburg	Franklin	Halifax
Nash	Gaston	Harnett
New Hanover	Guilford	Haywood
Northampton	Halifax	Henderson
Onslow	Harnett	Hertford
Orange	Haywood	Hoke
Person	Henderson	Jackson
Robeson	Hertford	Johnston
Rutherford	Jackson	Lenoir
Sampson	Johnston	Lincoln
Scotland	Lenoir	McDowell
Stokes	Lincoln	Mecklenburg
Union	McDowell	Nash
Vance	Mecklenburg	New Hanover
Wake	Nash	Northampton
Warren	New Hanover	Orange
Wayne	Northampton	Person
Wilson	Orange	Richmond
	Person	Robeson
	Richmond	Rutherford
	Robeson	Sampson
	Rockingham	Scotland
	Rutherford	Stanly
	Sampson	Stokes
	Scotland	Surry
	Stanly	Union
	Stokes	Vance
	Surry	Wake
	Union	Warren
	Vance	Wayne
	Wake	Wilson
	Warren	
	Wayne	
	Wilson	

Appendix B – Demonstrating Counties for Functional Assessments and/or Work First Benefits

Functional Capacity Evaluation/Vocational Assessment Counties (Demonstration Grant Counties)

County	Type of Functional Assessment Demonstrated
Alamance	Functional Capacity Evaluations
Burke	Functional Capacity Evaluations
Cabarrus	Functional Capacity Evaluations
Caldwell	Functional Capacity Evaluations
Cleveland	Vocational Assessments
Carteret	Vocational Assessments
Cumberland	Vocational Assessments
Davidson	Functional Capacity Evaluations
Harnett	Vocational Assessments
Lincoln	Functional Capacity Evaluations
McDowell	Vocational Assessments
Robeson	Vocational Assessments
Rockingham	Functional Capacity Evaluations
Rutherford	Vocational Assessments
Surry	Functional Capacity Evaluations
Vance	Vocational Assessments
Wake	Vocational Assessments
Wilson	Vocational Assessments

Work First Benefits Counties (Demonstration Grant and Electing Counties)

County	Electing or Demonstration Grant	Implementation Date of Project
Beaufort	Electing County	January 2003
Cumberland	Demonstration Grant	February 2007
Guilford	Demonstration Grant	January 2009
Iredell	Electing County	October 1999
Lenoir	Electing County	July 2003
New Hanover	Demonstration Grant	November 2008
Person	Demonstration Grant	December 2008
Robeson	Demonstration Grant	November 2008
Wilson	Electing Grant	October 2007