



Application for 2009 Outstanding County Program Awards

County (if multi-county entry, list all): **Wake County**

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The Association encourages electronic submissions. E-mail the application and project/program description to Todd McGee at todd.mcgee@ncacc.org. You can also fax your entry to (919) 733-1065 (attn. Todd McGee), or mail it to: NCACC, 215 N. Dawson St., Raleigh, NC 27603. Applications must be postmarked by **Friday, Feb. 26, 2010**.

Projects/programs must have been implemented between Jan. 1, 2008, and Dec. 31, 2009. For additional information and category criteria, visit www.ncacc.org/awards/ocpa/about.html.

Project title: **Employment Assistance Programs @ Wake County Public Libraries**

Category (you may check more than one):

General Government Human Services Public Information/Participation

Address each of the following questions in a typed program/project summary in a separate Word document attached to this application form. Limit your responses to two pages. Use single-spaced lines and 12-point, Times New Roman font. Supporting materials may be submitted, but due to time constraints, judges may not review the materials.

1. What are the purpose, history, timeline and budget of the program/project? Will the county realize any projected cost savings? (For public information/participation programs, please try to estimate participation levels).
2. What makes the program/project unique? How does it differ from similar projects in your county or in other counties?
3. How well did the program use available resources, given the limitations on such resources?
4. Can this project be duplicated in other counties? If another county wanted to do a similar project, what advice would you give them to minimize obstacles and problems?
5. How did the project involve collaboration with other agencies, jurisdictions, nonprofits, businesses, etc.? How well did this collaboration work and is it on-going?

1. Purpose, history, timeline, and budget

The purpose of the **Employment Assistance Programs @ Wake County Libraries** was to provide training, information, and support for unemployed, underemployed, financially stressed citizens of Wake County in response to the national economic downturn. Hearing stories about people losing their jobs, seeing people come into the library to use our wireless access, and recognizing people's fears about finances and keeping their homes, the Libraries had to reach out to our public and help, and, thereby, become a quasi-employment center.

While the library system has always had some career and job programs, we felt that as a vital part of this community we as a library system should do more in a concerted effort with some centralized planning. Beginning in January 2009, therefore, the Libraries began offering programs throughout the county in four areas: **Career Retooling, Building Technology Skills, Life Management, and Small Business Assistance**. Programs included Landing the Right Job, Interview Skills and Dress for Success. We taught important job related technologies such as Microsoft Office 2007, PowerPoint and Excel. We taught resume writing to people who hadn't written a resume in 20 years. We helped reduce people's anxieties and confusion with sessions on managing stress and goal setting. We partnered with SCORE business consultants with easy walk-in consultation locations at the libraries to help people start a business or give much needed support to existing ones. Our success was due in part to our partners: JobLink, UNC-Chapel Hill, the State Library of North Carolina and many others. The State Library created a Job Seekers Toolkit for all libraries throughout the state, and Wake County Libraries in turn trained staff to use these tools. We also included experts in the career and job fields from our community to teach, consult and guide.

This project, which did not need any additional budget, was successful with thanks to a committed library staff and the assistance of our community partners. We used many different technologies to market these programs – Twitter, Facebook, blogs, Raleigh's News and Observer.com, and the Libraries' web site.

Estimated Participation levels:

Programs: 1050 people attended

Technology classes: 800 people attended

Job and Career Assistance Lab: 213 people assisted

SCORE consultants for small businesses: 236 new clients and consultations

2. Uniqueness of project

This project was unique because we changed from an individual branch to a group/system-wide plan which allowed for a greater and more widespread responsiveness to shifting community needs. For example, it was not standard practice to teach stress reduction so often, but we were able to quickly recognize the need and respond accordingly around the county.

Due to the economic collapse, people needed not just jobs or housing assistance, but a place where they could use computers to complete their resumes. They needed free classes to update resumes and free access to computers to apply for jobs whose applications are increasingly only available online. For instance, grocery clerk and stocking jobs at Harris Teeter, Kroger's, and Food Lion all require online applications and people have to understand the technology skills needed to complete them. We created a job and resume assistance lab manned by specialists solely for the purpose of helping people update their

resumes and apply online. Although other county agencies were helping individuals with issues such as housing, shelter, employment, and food, the Libraries became a center for social services support, and, unlike many county agencies, we were open nights and weekends.

3. Using available resources

The Wake County Libraries made use of its internal resources such as meeting rooms, computer labs, computer equipment, and staff. For example, the Computer Lab at the Cameron Village Library sat idle 50 % of the time. But with this program, more technology classes were scheduled, and the Job and Career Assistance Lab in that room filled many hours. Several of our Librarians were trained on resume writing and career resources and contributed to training efforts.

Through our relationships with Capital Area JobLink Career Centers, we were able to present programs by career/employment professionals. And they, through their partnership with AmeriCorp, provided free staffing in a Job and Career Assistance Lab at one branch and one-on-one job searching assistance at another, which has now been expanded to several branches.

We used the Job Search Toolkit and other resources developed in 2009 by the State Library of North Carolina for staff training and programs for the public. We relied on our in-house Electronic Resources Librarians for direction and training on new technologies needed for the new marketplace.

4. Program duplication

This program can be duplicated in other counties. Although staff sizes and resources may vary, all counties have libraries with computer access and technologically savvy staff. The State Library, who assisted us with many resources, has resources available to aid all libraries in the state along with trainers who can help, if needed.

This program seems to work best with a system-wide approach. The most important strategy is to utilize the community. As Wake County Libraries staff found, people are very willing to help and volunteer their time to teach resume writing, career coaching, interviewing, etc. County and city agencies should be included in developing programs. Most counties have JobLink Career Centers, partnered by the NC Department of Commerce, the Workforce Development Board, and the Employment Security Commission.

5. Collaboration

Collaboration with other agencies was essential. We partnered with JobLink, Wake County, SCORE Business Consultants, AARP, AmeriCorps, Lutheran Family Services, Career and Life Coaches, HR staff from businesses, and real estate agents for housing information. And all of our collaborations were successful because we shared the same goal: helping our community during these stressful economic times. SCORE counselors have never seen such growth in their consultations and are expanding to partner with more library branches. JobLink is planning more programs, including our now annual three day workshop. These collaborations have been so successful that they are now viewed as established programs by these agencies and the general public.

**Sample of classes, programs, workshops, events offered
Wake County Public Libraries 2009**

- **Career Retooling**

Programs:

- Job Hunting in the Triangle
- Getting Around Employment Barriers
- The Application Process
- Dress for Success
- Interviewing Skills
- Job Searching Online
- Finding a Job After 50
- Networking
- Ask a HR Representative
- Finding the Work You Want
- Building your Writing Skills
- Resume and Job Searching Boot Camp

Job Application and Career Assistance Lab at the Cameron Village Library -two nights a week with JobLink staff and other community volunteers helping people with Resumes and online job applications. (213 people assisted)

- **Building Technology Skills**

All participating branches added technology classes to accommodate growing numbers of participants. Over **60 %** of attendees were back on job market and needing to upgrade skills.

Classes:

- MS Office Suite including Word, Excel, Access
- PowerPoint, Publisher
- Resumes Online
- Google Searching
- Getting an Email Account (needed now for many online job applications and jobs)

(branch example: 44 technology classes with 319 attendees – computer lab holds 12 seats)

- **Life Management Skills**

Classes repeated several times and throughout system

- Building Self-Confidence
- Stress Reduction
- Dare to Dream: Goal Setting Workshop
- Motivation
- Overcoming Obstacles

- **Small Business Assistance**

SCORE, Counselors to America's Small Business (partners with 2 regional libraries)
Counselors meet weekly with people needing assistance for their potential business or existing business needing help – free, walk in, very convenient (**236+ counseling sessions**).

Sample of use of WCPL Web site for promotion
Job Assistance Programs @ YOUR LIBRARY

If you have just graduated from high school or college, or are contemplating a career change, the [Career Search Guide](#) can help you with your search.

- [Cameron Village Library, 1930 Clark Ave., Raleigh 919-856-6710](#)
Free resume and online job application assistance in the Computer Lab on Tuesdays & Thursdays: 5–7 p.m. A technology volunteer will be on hand to assist patrons on walk-in-only basis (first-come, first-served) with resumes and online applications.
- Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) will hold free, confidential, walk-in counseling sessions on Wednesdays to address your small business needs. Every 1st & 3rd Wednesday, 9 a.m.–noon; 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 4–7 p.m.
- [Express Library – Fayetteville Street, 334 Fayetteville St., Raleigh 919-856-6690](#)
A volunteer from Access Joblink AmeriCorps is in the library to assist with resume writing, job searches, interviewing techniques, and online job applications every Thursday afternoon from 1–4:30 p.m. Help is provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Please come by the library or call for additional information.
- [Eva Perry Regional Library, 2100 Shepherd's Vineyard Drive, Apex 919-387-2100](#)
Access Joblink AmeriCorps in partnership with the library is pleased to present “Assistance with Resume Writing, Job Search & Interviewing Skills” Mondays, 9 a.m.–noon, and Monday evening (by appointment). For additional information please call Dennis Hickey, Employment Advisor, at 919-557-1121.
- [Holly Springs Library, 300 W. Ballentine St., Holly Springs 919-577-1660](#)
Volunteers from Access Joblink AmeriCorps will be in the library on Monday evenings, 5:30–8 p.m. providing assistance with resume writing, job-search strategies, and interviewing techniques. For additional information please call Margaret Williamson at 919-557-1121.
- [West Regional Library, 4000 Louis Stephens Drive, Cary 919-463-8500](#)
Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) holds free, confidential, walk-in counseling sessions to address your small business needs. No appointments; this service is first-come, first-served. Sessions are held the first four Thursdays of the month.

JobLink / AmeriCorps provides assistance with job search skills such as resume writing and interviewing. Sessions are first-come, first-served on Wednesdays, 1:00pm - 4:00pm, and evenings (by appointment). For appointments call Dennis Hickey, Employment Advisor, at 919-557-1121.

For ongoing events, please visit: www.wakegov.com/libraries/events/adults



Looking for a job?
Try these
employment resources