

**North Carolina Association of County Commissioners  
2009 Local Government Federal Credit Union Employee Productivity Awards Application**

**County:** Buncombe      **Employee:** Marty Phillips      **Email:** marty.phillips@buncombecounty.org

**County Department:** Social Services      **Employee Title:** IMS III Food Assistance

**County Phone:** 828-250-5500      **County Mailing Address:** Post Office Box 7408 Asheville, North Carolina 28802-7408

**Is this project being submitted on behalf of two or more employees?**      **NO**       **YES**

If yes, please provide below a listing of all project employees in Number 6. Employee & title as listed above should be for lead team member.

Fair Labors Standards Act Designation: In order for your project to be eligible, you MUST indicate one of the following. If you do not know, please contact your personnel director.

**EXEMPT:**       **NON-EXEMPT:**       **BOTH (if applicable to a team):**

1.	<b>Productivity Improvement Title:</b>	Buncombe County Food Assistance Customer Service Efficiencies
2.	<b>Implementation Date (must be between January 1, 2008 and December 31, 2008):</b>	January 1, 2008
3.	<p><b>Please describe the productivity improvement. (Please limit response to these 2 pages.)</b> In Calendar year 2008, Buncombe County made several improvements to both enhance services to customers as well as increase internal efficiencies to allow staff to adjust to climbing caseloads.</p> <p><i>Altered Scheduling:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed from half day intake to full day intake</li> <li>• Adjusted staffing to accommodate lunch time intake</li> <li>• Eliminated FLEX schedules to align with client intake demands</li> <li>• Eliminated 30 minute lag time in the morning before intake sign-on.</li> <li>• Standardized hours of operation to 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for all staff including management staff.</li> </ul> <p><i>Adjusted Training Plan:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streamlined training manual to have new staff on regular intake in 3 months instead of 6 months.</li> </ul> <p><i>Altered Internal Business Processes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented timed standards to decrease client wait time in the lobby.</li> <li>• Rotated staff meetings and training sessions to maintain day long intake.</li> <li>• Changed Division monthly meeting format to conclude in one hour.</li> <li>• Re-developed forms to expedite case processing times</li> <li>• Required the client (if able) to complete as much of the application in the lobby as possible while waiting for a caseworker. The caseworker completes the verification workbook. This cut the actual interview time down by 40%</li> </ul>	

	<p><b>Capitalized on Specific Staff Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designated three staff members to process Semi-annual reports, monthly (approximately 650+ per month).</li> <li>• Designated one staff member to pull On Line Verifications for the department.</li> <li>• Two staff members deal exclusively with SSI, SNAP, and Drug Apps.</li> <li>• One staff member deals specifically with telephone, internet, and outreach apps.</li> <li>• Designated one staff member to assist Slavic speaking clients (adding consistency for clients)</li> <li>• Designated one staff member to assist Hispanic clients (eliminating the need for interpreters and adding consistency for clients)</li> </ul> <p><b>Streamlined and Expanded Outreach Efforts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carried out on-site visits to industries that are cutting back on staff.</li> <li>• Carried out on-site visits to prisons for pre-release instruction</li> <li>• Expanded partnership with MANNA food bank.</li> </ul> <p>Eliminated the making of Career Start appointments.</p>		
4.	<p><b>Please describe why this project was initiated or what problem it addressed:</b> This project was initiated to accommodate the growth in Food Assistance cases and to provide services to individuals who were eligible, but had never applied. The project ensured that Food Assistance benefits were delivered efficiently and correctly to the recipients.</p>		
5.	<p><b>Please quantify the improvement's results in terms of cost savings, cost avoidance and/or a higher level of services provided.</b></p>		
	<p><b><i>(Please indicate what resources were used to achieve your results, and what was done with the time savings, if any accrued).</i></b></p>		
<p><u>Please quantify the improvement's results in terms of cost savings, cost avoidance and/or a higher level of services provided.</u> In 2008, the Buncombe County Food Assistance unit elected to make significant internal changes and enact efficiencies to be more responsive to client needs and increasing demands. The results of the changes can be measure in terms of cost savings and improved outcomes.</p> <p><b>Cost Savings:</b>  During this time period the Food Assistance division only had to add one additional staff person (an increase of 4% in staffing) despite having to accommodate a caseload increase of 19.8% or 2154 cases (4171 recipients). If we had not implemented the many efficiencies above, and caseloads has remained at December 2007 levels, we would have needed three positions in addition to the one that was added, costing the county approximately \$57,000 each or a total of <b>\$171,000</b> for the three. This was money that the county saved because the Department did not have to ask for new positions.</p> <p>The only costs incurred with the efficiencies mentioned in section 3, were the small amounts of staff time in carrying out outreach activities and form changes, as well as the cost for clipboards and pens for clients to fill out applications in the lobby.</p> <p><b>Better Outcomes:</b>  Despite the increases in workload mentioned above, staff were able to improve outcomes for clients as a result of their efforts. In fact, they were able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduce lobby wait time (from 57.22 minutes in 2007 to 14 minutes by the end of 2008)</li> <li>2. Process applications under time standards (staff average was 9 days compared with the state standard of 30 days)</li> <li>3. Process 0.017% of all expedited applications (all but 1) within time standards.</li> <li>4. Process 98% of all applications timely</li> <li>5. Maintain a 100% accuracy rate with the state</li> </ol>			
6.	<p><b>Please provide any other descriptive information you would like to be considered by the review committee.</b></p>		
<p>The Food Assistance Unit, including all staff members, made personal commitments and sacrifices to ensure that the goals of the project were achieved to provide exemplary service to the citizens of community. The members of the team were: Marty Phillips, Erin Henderlight, Rae Gibbens, Angie Jenkins, Karen Hart, Linda Rogers, Margie Allman, and Dottie Medford</p>			
County Manager's Name:	Wanda Greene	Supervisor's Name:	Tim Rhodes

Return by **June 19, 2009** via email to [ncacc@ncacc.org](mailto:ncacc@ncacc.org).

### Total Food Assistance Caseloads 2006-2008

