

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

**County:** Wilson      **Employee:** Susan Parker      **Email:** sparker@wilson-co.com

**County Department:** Wilson County Dept. of Social Services      **Employee Title:** Social Work Program Manager

**County Phone:** 252-206-4171      **County Mailing Address:** 100 W. Gold Street, PO Box 459, Wilson, NC 27894-0459

**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):**

<b>1.</b>	<b>Productivity Improvement Title:</b>	"Working for Benefits" – Pay After Performance
<b>2.</b>	<b>Implementation Date (must be between January 1, 2008 and December 31, 2008):</b>	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Please describe the productivity improvement. (Please limit response to these 2 pages.)</b>	
<p>Wilson County Department of Social Services has increased our Work First Participation Rate from an annual 34% average in 2007 to 52% in 2008. Wilson County implemented "<b>Working for Benefits</b>" Program through our Work First County Electing Employment and Cash Assistance program. The purpose was to establish a program that would first make sense to our customers but second be more realistic in modeling employee/employer expectations from welfare applicants and recipients. "Working for Benefits" is part of our Work First County Electing Plan where families applying for Work First Cash Assistance will now have to perform their required hours of training/education/work experience <b>first, before they can receive their welfare check</b>. Families applying for assistance must now participate in a combination of education/training/job search and work experience up to 35 hours per week. Failure to complete the required hours, without a good cause reason, results in the family not receiving a Work First cash assistance check for the month. With this initiative we have achieved a higher level of service while at the same time providing cost savings. We are promoting a true simulation of the "work/business" world and promoting personal and family responsibility. The savings for our county has been extraordinary. Families are spending far less time on WFFA and transitioning quicker into employment or obtaining financial support through other means such as child support, SSI/SSA benefits, or part-time employment. "Working for Benefits" simply makes sense to our participants, DSS Board, County Commissioners and the general public. The Federal Government requires all states to achieve a 50% or higher participation rate in the Work First program in order to avoid huge financial penalties with State's TANF/Work First Block Grant Funding.</p> <p>We believe that the implementation of the "Working for Benefits" program not only stimulated the Work First Participation rate for our County, but provided a huge cost savings. It has also created the "conditions" for a welfare program that instills responsibility, which is helping families take personal and financial responsibility for their future.</p>		

<b>4.</b>	<b>Please describe why this project was initiated or what problem it addressed:</b>		
<p>The “Working for Benefits” project is unique in that we established a workable program that would encourage a more accountable welfare reform program that encouraged more responsibility and accountability of families as they work towards self-sufficiency and independence from Welfare. Our county also like many other counties in North Carolina were not meeting the Federal Participation Rate requirement monthly or annually. With the Deficit Reduction Act and financial penalties for states and potentially counties, we decided we needed a <i>new direction</i>. We believe that our “Working for Benefits” is the next phase of Welfare reform and will change the landscape and perception of Welfare for generations to come. It is helping to create a sense of dignity, worth and responsibility for families and individuals in Wilson county. We are here to truly help anyone that needs help and are willing to work towards improving their education, skills, attitude and progress in achieving the ultimate goal of a full time job that pays a livable wage. We have always been proactive, visionary, and creative in developing strategies that are unique to our county and that will improve the workforce. ***As a result of our implementation and success with the “Working for Benefits” initiative, the state of North Carolina Division of Social Services will be implementing our model in all 100 counties by July 1, 2009.</p>			
<b>5.</b>	<b>Please quantify the improvement’s results in terms of cost savings, cost avoidance and/or a higher level of services provided.</b>		
<i>(Please indicate what resources were used to achieve your results, and what was done with the time savings, if any accrued).</i>			
<p>The cost savings for our county for the past year has been approximately \$600,000. In these economic times that are facing states and counties, this program has proved to not only be a cost savings for local government, but an investment in human capital and our future workforce.</p>			
<b>6.</b>	<b>Please provide any other descriptive information you would like to be considered by the review committee.</b>		
<p>Our Working for Benefits Program has become a motivational program in helping families transition back to work, because they realize that if they don’t perform they will not receive their check. It is “realistic”, it is “immediate”, and it is “responsible”. Helping families to take responsibility, participate in activities that will lead to employment, skill development, substance abuse or mental health treatment and prepare individuals to be contributing tax paying, hard working citizens is what we need to do to help families that can work. A community is only as strong as the people who live and work there. We believe that all families with children must take the responsibility to provide the financial support for their children. With this expectation comes’ an increased self-esteem, self worth, and a stronger welfare program that the public/tax payers can “respect”. Staff and Teams Responsible for developing and implementing this model: Susan Parker, SW Program Manager; Barbara Massey, WF Supervisor; Terri Mitchell, Work First Supervisor; Andrea O’Brian, Social Worker; Tammy Eason, Social Worker; Warren Bisette, Social Worker; Amy Latour, Social Worker; Arlisha Cooper, Social Worker; Tondra Talley, IM II Case Worker; Faye Atkinson, IM II Case Worker; Audrey Crisp, CSR;</p>			
<b>County Manager’s Name:</b>	Ellis Williford, County Manager	<b>Supervisor’s Name:</b>	Glenn Osborne, Director

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