

**2008 Innovations Awards Program**  
**APPLICATION**

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ID # (assigned by CSG): 08-M-29SD

**Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:**

State: South Dakota

Assign Program Category (applicant): Human Resources/Education

1. Program Name
  - a. Dakota Roots
  
2. Administering Agency
  - a. South Dakota Department of Labor
  
3. Contact Person (Name and Title)
  - a. Marcia Hultman, Deputy Secretary/Director of Workforce Services
  
4. Address
  - a. 700 Governors Drive, Kneip Building, Pierre, SD 57501
  
5. Telephone Number
  - a. 605-773-3101
  
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  - a. 605-773-6184
  
7. Email Address
  - a. [marcia.hultman@state.sd.us](mailto:marcia.hultman@state.sd.us)
  
8. Website Address
  - a. [www.dakotaroots.com](http://www.dakotaroots.com)
  
9. Please provide a two-sentence description of this program.
  - a. Dakota Roots is Governor Rounds' workforce development initiative created to connect individuals who have a desire to return to South Dakota with career opportunities with the State's leading businesses. It is a partnership between the S.D. Department of Labor, the S.D. Department of Tourism and State Development, and the Office of the Governor to enhance state development and join citizens, business leaders, and state agencies in a collaborated effort to make South Dakota stronger.
  
10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 1, 2008 to be considered.
  - a. Dakota Roots launched in October 2006. As of March 1, 2008, the program has been operational for 16 months and 9 days.
  
11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

- a. Dakota Roots was created specifically to connect former South Dakotans with career opportunities within the state. Over the years, there have been some misconceptions about the quality of jobs available and many of our citizens have left for “greener pastures” and promises of higher wages elsewhere without fully comprehending they could realize their personal and career aspirations right here at home.

South Dakota, like many other states, is facing the reality of retirement age individuals leaving the workforce in droves at the same time businesses are thriving and adding new jobs. These factors will merge in the very near future and create a serious lack of skilled workers. One of many initiatives launched to address this issue, Dakota Roots was designed to provide an avenue for businesses within the state to connect with those individuals with strong ties to the state.

As an added bonus, Dakota Roots can be utilized as an economic development tool. As the database of interested job seekers and their education, skills, and experience is created, it allows potential businesses to look at the not only the current labor pool available within the state but also at those who would be willing to return to the state given the right opportunity.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

- a. The first step in the creation of the Dakota Roots program was developing the concept. Governor Mike Rounds brought the idea to the forefront and also acted as the impetus to bring key players together to establish a plan that fulfilled his vision while utilizing and maximizing existing resources. This phase involved the partnering of the Governor’s Office, S.D. Department of Labor, and the S.D. Department of Tourism and State Development.

As the S.D. Department of Labor already had an online job matching tool developed, it was decided to enhance this web application rather than starting from scratch. By building on this system, it allowed the project to move forward at a much more rapid pace than if something new had been created. Additionally, this resulted in considerable monetary savings.

Once the basic functionality of the web application was settled on, a logo and marketing plan were established. The basic look and messaging for the program was designed to be true to fundamental values of South Dakota. Once partner agency roles and responsibilities were established, the project was launched publicly.

Following is the chronology for establishing the program:

1. Formulation of program philosophy. Summer 2006
2. Involvement of key partners including the Governor’s Office, S.D. Department of Tourism and State Development, and S.D. Department of Labor. Summer 2006
3. Creation of logo and primary marketing message. Fall 2006
4. Determination that S.D. Department of Labor job matching web application would meet the needs of project with enhancements. Fall 2006
5. Assignment of S.D. Department of Labor staff to key roles to ensure success of program. For instance, staff assigned as first point of contact for registered job seekers, as case workers for job seekers, and as business recruitment contacts as well as lead roles for promotion of the program. Fall 2006
6. Creation of Dakota Roots homepage to act as portal for friends and family members to register individuals living out of state, for individuals to register themselves, and for businesses to become partners. Fall 2006

7. Launch of program publicly by Governor at formal event. Launch scheduled to coincide with the opening of pheasant season which sees the return of many former residents to the state. Statewide press releases and media coverage recruited. October 20, 2006
8. Initiated what was to become on-going promotion of the program. Efforts including partnering with state post secondary education alumni associations to message to all alumni; newspaper, radio, and television coverage including some paid advertisements, promotion by local S.D. Department of Labor and Tourism and State Development staff; and presentations at public events. Fall 2006 to present
9. Job seekers able to post resumes through web application and able to search available openings. This may be done self-service or staff assisted. Ongoing
10. Businesses able to post openings, review resumes, and search for applicants. This may be done self-service or staff assisted. Partner businesses are also show-cased through a web presence, and specific careers and industries are highlighted at any given time. Ongoing
11. Current numbers indicate the success of the program.
  - a. Registered job seekers = 1,886
  - b. Participants who have entered employment = 338
  - c. Business partners = 233
  - d. Business expansion referrals = 34

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

- a. This program is unique in that it draws on friends and family members to help the state attract workers back to our workforce. Initial marketing efforts were created with the expressed intent of having people such as mothers, grandfathers, aunts, sisters, and friends all help in making the connection to those who have left the state or have a desire to relocate to the state.

Additionally, this program recognizes people with some experience or knowledge of the state are going to be the easiest to attract to the state. Such individuals don't need to be sold on the quality of life – rather they need to be exposed to the quality of careers.

Businesses eager for beneficial recruiting tools are more than willing to sign on as business partners. They realize by listing their professional openings with the program, they are gaining the advantages of the focused marketing efforts which results in increased exposure for their openings. This is all accomplished at no cost to the business.

By involving multiple agencies and building on existing programs, Dakota Roots has rapidly grown to be recognized statewide as a premier recruitment tool without a incurring a huge cost.

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

- a. No specific purchases were made with the exception of a website that was built specific for the program. The cost of constructing this website was \$1,200. This website is linked directly to our current online employment delivery system database (SDWORKS) which required minimal enhancements to meet our operational needs. S.D. Department of Labor staff were utilized during the startup for marketing and operations. Our marketing start-up costs, which consisted of hiring a company to

produce marketing material and their staff time, was \$25,000.

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?
  - a. The cost of maintaining the Dakota Roots website is approximately \$3,000 per year. Utilizing S.D. Department of Labor staff and the time they spend with Dakota Roots clients and businesses cost approximately \$140,000 per year. Producing marketing material and ad campaigns cost approximately \$35,000 per year.
16. How is the program funded?
  - a. The Dakota Roots program is funded both by federal Wagner-Peyser funds and state general funds.
17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.
  - a. No.
18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?
  - a. To operate the Dakota Roots program it requires the use of telephone, computers, and the Internet. The SDWORKS application (previously mentioned) is utilized to maintain our database of Dakota Roots job seekers and businesses, which also functions as our way to match seekers to job openings in the state. SDWORKS also provides us with statistics which assists in administering the program. The website is maintained with Macromedia Dreamweaver and Adobe Photoshop.
19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.
  - a. Yes, this program did originate in South Dakota. Though other states may have done similar limited outreach, the cohesive, on-going efforts of the Dakota Roots program are unparalleled. Governor Mike Rounds was the originator of the concept for this program and the driving force behind its beginnings.
  - b. Contact designee:  
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Pierre, SD 57501  
605-773-5941  
[marcia.hultman@state.sd.us](mailto:marcia.hultman@state.sd.us)
20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states. If YES, what actions remain to be taken?
  - a. No.
21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?
  - a. The program is fully functional and has demonstrated much success. Actions remaining to be taken include increased out-of-state marketing to target audiences. Areas with a high concentration of ex-residents will be considered for South Dakota specific job fairs and marketing. Targeted outreach can also be done focusing on post-secondary program graduates with the specific degrees or skills a business may be searching for. South Dakota career opportunities will also be promoted to visitors to the state through materials provided by the S.D. Department of Tourism and State Development.
22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.
  - a. The numbers speak for themselves. Considering this program is only a year old, the number of individuals returning to the state and therefore placed in employment, the

number of business partners, the number of businesses interested in relocating or expanding to the state, and the number of registered job seekers all point to the success of this program.

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- b. Due to the commitment of excellent customer service to both the job seekers and businesses, the program is staff time intensive. The program is designed to provide the level of service an individual requests, which can be very hands-on in some cases. For others, the web-application is the primary tool utilized.

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

- a. When Dakota Roots kicked off, there were three S.D. Department of Labor staff handling the day-to-day operations of making contact with job seekers and businesses. Shortly after, when it was realized how fast the program was gaining momentum, we initiated the concept of utilizing a single point of contact who would then disseminate the seekers to respective S.D. Department of Labor staff, depending upon the location the seeker was looking to relocate. S.D. Department of Labor staff also began actively conducting outreach to businesses, explaining the program and recruiting them as a partner. The concept has remained the same, but the program has grown to a point where each of the S.D. Department of Labor's 14 South Dakota Career Centers have staff involved.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

- a. A sophisticated web-based job matching tool is essential to the success of this program. If such a tool does not exist or if the partners do not agree to utilize and possibly enhance an existing tool, the cost and time involved would increase considerably. It is also crucial to have the commitment of the right state agencies and high level decision makers in order for such a program to succeed.
- b. The rural nature of our state and the strong ties of our citizens to family, friends, and traditions have worked to the advantage of Dakota Roots.