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2010 Innovations Awards Application

Deadline: March 1, 2010

ID # (assigned by CSG): **10-MW-09KS**

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: Kansas

Assign Program Category (applicant): Human Resources/Education (Workforce Development)

1. Program Name: **KANSASWORKS** Virtual Services
2. Administering Agency: Kansas Department of Commerce
3. Contact Person (Name and Title): Linda J. Weaver, Administrator, Workforce Center Support Services
4. Address: 1000 SW Jackson, Suite 100, Topeka, KS 66612
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8. Web site Address: <http://www.kansascommerce.com/divisions/workforceservices>

9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program:
The Kansas Department of Commerce has installed High-Definition videoconferencing equipment capable of supporting group interactions in workforce centers across the State; this equipment is used to provide reemployment services for job seekers and business services for employers. By partnering with other entities with videoconferencing capacity (state and local libraries, Board of Regents, Correctional institutions, educational facilities, military installations and private businesses), the range of this program has expanded exponentially, providing employers and job seekers in Kansas the ability for face-to-face interactions with persons in any part of the globe.

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, 2010 to be considered:
After a pilot program to connect the workforce centers in Great Bend and Hutchinson, the program became operational July 2009 when a critical mass of equipment was installed. The installation of smaller mini-units suitable for 1-3 person interchanges will continue through 2010.

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?
Within the last couple of years, Commerce has been forced to make some difficult budget decisions, including no longer being able to support brick and mortar workforce centers in several rural communities. The initial solution was to have staff travel to remote locations on a regular basis; however, this solution also became too costly. As an alternative, Commerce installed videoconferencing equipment in 17 workforce centers in Kansas. High Definition videoconferencing provides a new, innovative and less expensive way to provide services despite the distance. Each videoconferencing unit includes a personal computer so **KANSASWORKS.com** and other job search tools can be displayed at the same time as the face-to-face conversation is taking place. This

helps workforce services staff to communicate, collaborate and connect successfully with job candidates, employers, and other key stakeholders.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order:
 - a) Installed pilot to connect workforce center with customer service location in community college.
 - b) Reviewed and analyzed pilot through customer survey, including customers with disabilities, to determine satisfaction with videoconferencing to receive services.
 - c) Appointed task force to make recommendation related to program planning and implementation.
 - d) Contracted with network integration firm to:
 - i) Confirm approach for deploying videoconferencing equipment in all parts of the state; and
 - ii) Make recommendations to enable a planned, controlled expansion of the functionality and geographic reach into the foreseeable future.
 - e) Developed high-level design and implementation plan for Kansas Information Technology Office (KITO).
 - i) Received KITO approval to proceed with implementation.
 - f) Distributed request for bids to purchase and install equipment.
 - i) Decided on vendor to install equipment in selected locations.
 - g) Implemented outreach plan to engage key partners to increase the reach to mutual customers.
 - h) Continue to evaluate the success of the program through cost savings reports and customer satisfaction surveys.
 - i) Implement marketing plan to raise public awareness of the program and engage additional partners beyond key group.
 - j) Expand uses of equipment to include:
 - i) Providing distance learning opportunities for dislocated workers and other job seekers;
 - ii) Conducting outreach and intake interviews with potential WIA participants;
 - iii) Carrying out progress updates and follow-up services with program enrollees;
 - iv) Providing prioritized and personalized services for military veterans and their spouses;
 - v) Offering employment and training services to individuals in adult or juvenile detention centers to prepare them to enter the labor force;
 - vi) Facilitating interviews between inmates nearing release and prospective employers;
 - vii) Facilitating dialogue with prospective Job Corps participants and their parents/guardians; and
 - viii) Conducting local and state workforce board meetings.

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

High Definition videoconferencing is cutting edge technology. With the extra quality in sound and video, it offers a more realistic option to a face to face meeting. The capability allows a more broad reach to customers, particularly those in rural communities. The biggest advantage of this creative, innovative and less expensive approach is the ability for people to communicate effectively without incurring expenses typically associated with in person meetings.

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.)

The program start-up cost was \$450,000 to include expenses such as the following:

 - a) Internal salaries for planning and program execution
 - b) Contract with network integration consulting firm
 - c) Bandwidth and related equipment for connectivity; and
 - d) HD videoconferencing equipment, PC, warranty and training

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?

The program's annual operational cost is \$130,000 for bandwidth. A promotion and marketing plan is being developed to raise awareness of the program and engage additional paying partners.

16. How is the program funded?

The program is funded by Wagner-Peyser, Workforce Investment Act and a small U.S. Department of Labor dislocated worker grant.

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

This program did not require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations. However, approval was required from the Kansas Legislative Joint Committee on Information Technology. This committee reviews new governmental computer hardware and software acquisition proposed by state agencies and institutions and their implementation plans. The committee makes recommendations on all such implementation plans and budget estimates, studies the progress and results of all newly implemented governmental computer hardware and software and makes an annual report to the legislative coordinating council as provided in K.S.A. 46-1207.

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

The typical installation utilizes Polycom HDX8000 High-Definition videoconferencing equipment and dual 42" monitors installed on a portable cart. In two locations, the videoconferencing equipment, monitors and sound system are mounted in a permanent video room. Each videoconferencing unit is complimented with a personal computer, wireless keyboard and mouse, and all-in-one printer/fax/scanner.

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.

The innovator of this program for the Kansas Department of Commerce is David Brennan, Director of Employment Services, Workforce Services Division. Mr. Brennan can be reached at (785) 296-7715, dbrennan@kansascommerce.com.

20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

No, we are not aware of similar programs in other states.

21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

Yes, the program has been fully implemented.

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

The program is already proving its effectiveness in cost savings. In a period of four months, this method of providing services has saved more than \$50,000 in travel costs.

During the first three years of the program, it is projected the following cost avoidances, cash savings, and other intangible benefits will be realized:

- \$2.8 million savings to distance training expenses and costs to expand services to new customers;
- \$2.4 million savings to job seekers and business to conduct distance job interviews and provide business services remotely;
- \$55,000 travel costs for state and local board members; and
- Reduction in environmental impact associated with conventional modes of travel.

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

When the idea for the program was conceived, it was intended to provide job search, resume assistance and pre-employment training for job seekers in one-on-one sessions and to facilitate distance interviews between job candidates and employers. The potential of this technology was quickly realized. The program has grown and changed to include the following:

- Foreign language and sign language interpretation services
- Interviews between inmates nearing release and prospective employers;
- Interviews with prospective Job Corps participants and their parents/guardians;

- Local and state workforce board meetings;
- Outreach and intake interviews with potential WIA participants;
- Prioritized and personalized services for military veterans and their spouses;
- Progress updates and follow-up services with program enrollees;
- Services to individuals in adult/juvenile detention centers preparing to enter the labor force; and
- Multitude of staff training such as:
 - ✓ Dealing with Difficult Customers;
 - ✓ Department of Corrections Offender Workforce Development Specialist training;
 - ✓ New employee training;
 - ✓ Performance Management Process training;
 - ✓ Soft-skills assessment training; and
 - ✓ Veterans staff training.

One of the most innovative uses for the equipment occurred this month. Kansas Commerce staff used the High-Definition videoconferencing equipment to negotiate a Kansas Industrial Training (KIT) contract with a new and expanding company currently located in Manila, Philippines.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program? States should not be discouraged by the program's start-up or annual operating costs. This program quickly shows a high rate of return-on-investment. Once partners realize the potential for cost savings to their organization, they are eager to come on board. Partner sponsors will, as you might expect, eventually help support the program's sustainability.

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2010 Innovations Awards Application Program Categories and Subcategories

Use these as guidelines to determine the appropriate Program Category for your state's submission and list that program category on page one of this application. Choose only one.

Infrastructure and Economic Development

- Business/Commerce
- Economic Development
- Transportation

Government Operations and Technology

- Administration
- Elections
- Information Systems
- Public Information
- Revenue
- Telecommunications

Health & Human Services

- Aging
- Children & Families
- Health Services
- Housing
- Human Services

Human Resources/Education

- Education
- Labor
- Management
- Personnel
- Training and Development
- Workforce Development

Natural Resources

- Agriculture
- Energy
- Environment
- Environmental Protection
- Natural Resources
- Parks & Recreation
- Water Resources

Public Safety/Corrections

- Corrections
- Courts
- Criminal Justice
- Drugs
- Emergency Management
- Public Safety

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CSG Innovations Awards 2010
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This application is also available at www.csg.org.