

NCWorks Innovations: Two Workforce Boards' Experiences with Virtual Career Fairs in 2020

While customers' physical access to NCWorks Career Centers has been temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, center staff and Workforce Development Boards have used creative techniques to connect local talent to hiring managers. From drive-up resume drops and online networking opportunities to regularly scheduled virtual career fairs, NCWorks partners across North Carolina have found various ways to engage jobseekers and assist employers with their workforce development needs. The N.C. Division of Workforce Solutions recently spoke with two Workforce Development Board representatives involved with ensuring the growth and success of virtual hiring events in their respective regions. Each took a different approach based on varied objectives, but they share the same advice to their colleagues: give virtual career fairs a try! Read on to learn about their individual experiences.

SPOTLIGHT on... [Rivers East Workforce Development Board](#) - serving Beaufort, Bertie, Hertford, Martin and Pitt counties (Information from Pat Harris, NCWorks Outreach Coordinator)

General Format – Two-day virtual career fair using an online hosting tool called “Easy Virtual Fair,” with the fair opening at 8 a.m. and live chats from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The first fair was held in April and was Healthcare-focused. The May fair was focused on Advanced Manufacturing. Employers were recruited to participate and to upload resources and information to their virtual company “booths” that visitors would



see during the event. When visitors arrived at the site, they were welcomed by a two-minute [video](#) from WDB leader Jennie Bowen. Other virtual opportunities included private chats with potential employers, active job openings and descriptions, online job applications and a mailbox option for after-hours visitors to leave messages with employers – all of which saved both the jobseekers and the employers travel, time and money.

Attendance/Participation – 10 employers participated during the Advanced Manufacturing event. 144 individuals pre-registered/registered, with an average 50% attendance rate. Through the registration process, jobseekers were also able to request additional services and assistance from local Career Centers without participating in the live fair.

Lessons Learned/Takeaways – This is an excellent opportunity to build rapport with employers, particularly the HR contacts. There is a learning curve for jobseekers and employers, especially in the beginning while establishing “booths,” uploading materials and resumes, and navigating the platform. Employers with active job openings requiring varied skilled levels are appealing to a range of jobseekers. Pat Harris is working to encourage more

interaction between jobseekers and employers during the virtual event. A Community Resource Fair is slated for July 29, and a follow-up event is in the planning stages.

SPOTLIGHT on... [Charlotte Works](#) - *servicing Mecklenburg County* (Information from Andrew Davila, Business Engagement Director)

General Format – Virtual hiring events held on Thursday mornings that allow attendees to participate via computer or phone and make connections with featured employers. During the weekly sessions, employers share information about their organizations and open positions. At the conclusion, jobseekers receive presentation materials that include details on the positions and how to apply, along with instructions on how to contact presenters for follow-up.

Attendance/Participation – Approximately 60 jobseekers and three to four actively hiring employers participate each week. These events are advertised through social media and various local partners (many represent the Workforce Providers Council). The City of Charlotte also promotes the events through its resources to their jobseeker contacts as well.

Lessons Learned/Takeaways – At the onset, Charlotte Works and partners decided to highlight employers with essential employment needs. During the first week, the employers weren't online to participate. Staff tested the platform capabilities and found it provides a much better experience when the employers are online to directly engage the attendees and have developed an outreach approach to attract companies (preferably those with a variety of positions to fill). Employers have expressed interest in continuing this approach to recruiting. For some, it is an ideal opportunity that is more efficient and less time-consuming - particularly when you consider the reduction in commuting for employers and jobseekers!

The Charlotte Works team considers the program a success. While they face the common challenge of following up and obtaining hiring information from the participating employers, the staff sees the benefits of their time and efforts exerted to make this program more professional and polished each week.

According to Andrew Davila, "to make connections for jobseekers, about 60, week after week, in itself is a success." In addition to making job referrals and providing resumes, the team makes time to follow up with jobseekers and employers following their participation and tracks feedback and placement into activity categories (Applies, Interviews, Hired). In closing, Davila shared this major piece of advice, "**If you haven't started a virtual hiring event, just start. There will be a lot of lessons learned, but you need to start somewhere....** This is exactly what our mission is. We're leading the demand for providing a skilled workforce, engaging our partners and fostering economic growth for our local businesses and jobseekers."

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CITY OF CHARLOTTE

VIRTUAL HIRING EVENT
The NCWorks Career Centers and the City of Charlotte invite you to join us via WebEx - www.webex.com by computer or phone
THURSDAY, JUNE 4, 2020 10:30 AM

Connect to companies that are hiring now!
• Learn who's got jobs and how to apply
• Chat live with employers about their openings
• Get links to other job seeker resources

THIS WEEK'S LIVE CHAT EMPLOYER:
Next Level Technicians

TO REGISTER: Text CLTNCWorks to 833-398-0836