

## **APPENDIX B. INNOVATIVE PRACTICES IN RAPID RESPONSE**

**This Appendix is part of the following report:**

***Rapid Response under the Workforce Investment Act: An Evaluation of  
Management, Services, and Financing***

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For the Employment and Training Administration, US Department of Labor**

## APPENDIX B. INNOVATIVE PRACTICES IN RAPID RESPONSE

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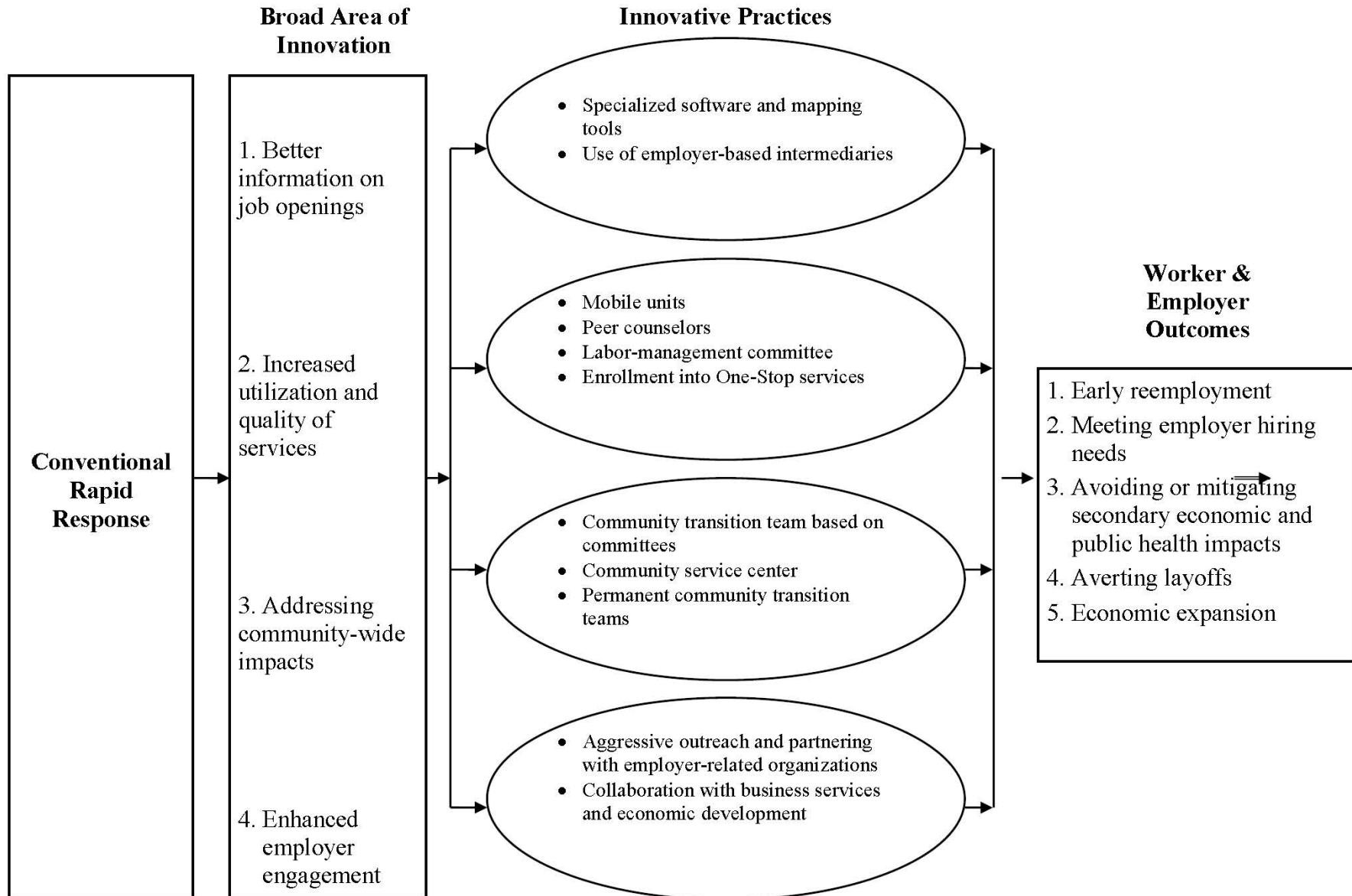
### Introduction

Rapid Response activities to assist workers and communities affected by large layoffs and company shutdowns are currently required of state workforce systems under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and have been required since 1988 under a prior workforce law. While the fundamentals of Rapid Response -- prompt service delivery, mobilization of multiple resources, and efforts to anticipate and even avert dislocations -- have remained essentially unchanged, many state and local workforce systems have experimented over time with different methods for addressing those fundamentals, and a number of innovative practices have emerged. Identifying and documenting these practices was a key part of the evaluation of Rapid Response and the practices are discussed briefly in the main report but in greater detail in this Appendix. The innovations are categorized around four areas:

- **Better information on job openings.** Innovations here focused on providing additional resources to update leads for job openings and new opportunities, beyond the public labor exchange.
- **Increased utilization and quality of services.** Innovations here focused on increasing enrollment and use of services by enhancing physical proximity and access, as well as improving the effectiveness of services by competitive procurement.
- **Addressing community-wide impacts.** Innovative practices here focused on mobilizing and delivering multiple types of services and leveraging resources to address large dislocations in small communities, where the vitality of local economies, the tax base of local governments, and the health and well-being of workers and their families were threatened.
- **Employer engagement.** Employers play key roles in the initial provision of services to dislocated workers and in the hiring that ends their unemployment. Yet many employers were unaware of Rapid Response services, opposed to government-sponsored assistance, or believed services would be ineffective. Innovations here focused on creating partnerships with firms that dealt with a wide variety of companies.

A conceptual framework showing these broad categories, the specific innovative solutions, and the outcomes they are designed to create are depicted graphically in Exhibit 1.

**Exhibit 1:**  
**Conceptual Framework: Area of Innovation, Innovative Practices, and Outcomes**



## Methodology

A multi-stage process was used to identify innovative Rapid Response practices. Nominations of “effective,” “promising,” and “innovative” practices were solicited from ETA Regional Office Rapid Response coordinators. The 50 distinctive practices nominated were then classified by category and region to ensure variety and geographic distribution. Then using a dictionary definition of “innovative”—“featuring new methods; advanced and original” — three operational criteria<sup>1</sup> were used to select practices for further exploration. The criteria were that each approach was:

- An entirely new practice or a new use of an existing practice,
- Not commonly used nationally, and
- Used frequently by the practitioner (the state or local area) in its Rapid Response program.

Data were collected on each of the selected practices via telephone interviews with a range of respondents familiar with each practice, including state-level representatives and local workforce professionals who participated in the dislocation and used the practice. This case study data were supplemented by information from four of the nine site visits conducted for the larger evaluation of Rapid Response. Site visitors nominated practices based on their interviews, and individual practices were selected as innovative, using the same criteria as above.

Exhibit 2 lists the sites and practices discussed in this appendix and the method by which the data were gathered. Exhibit 3 shows a map of the sites.

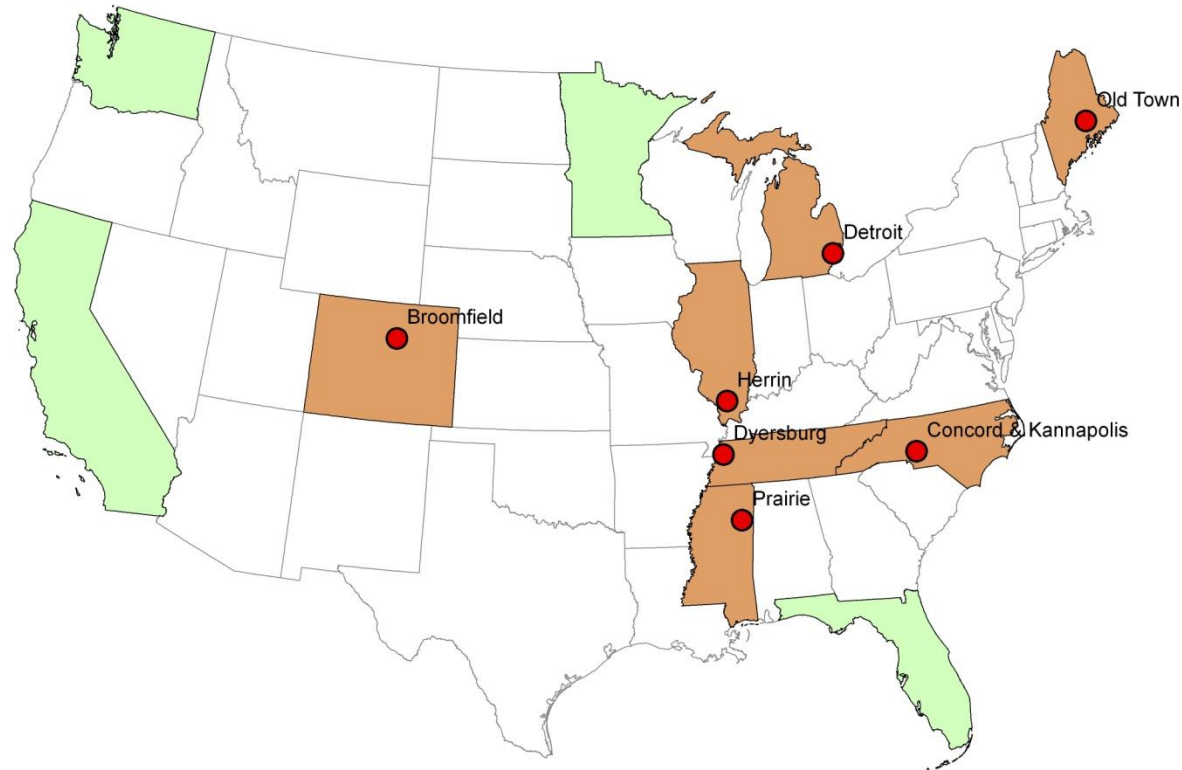
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<sup>1</sup> Encarta Dictionary, on-line version.

**Exhibit 2:**  
**Innovative Practice States/Local Areas and Data Source**

<b>State/LWIA</b>	<b>Type of Practice</b>	<b>Data Source</b>
California San Jose/Silicon Valley	Specialized software for identifying jobs	Site visit
Colorado	Systematic outreach and partnering with employer-based organizations	Case study phone interview
Florida Broward County Region 22	Use of employer-based intermediaries	Site visit
Illinois Southern Illinois Workforce Investment Board (LWIA #25)	Peer workers Committee-structured, community transition teams	Case study phone interview
Maine	Permanent, regional community transition teams	Case study phone interview
Michigan	Collaboration with business services and economic development for layoff aversion	Case study phone interview
Minnesota	Labor-management committee competitive procurement	Site visit
Mississippi	Mobile units	Case study phone interview
North Carolina Centralina Council of Governments	Community service center	Case study phone interview
Tennessee	Collaboration with business services and economic development for layoff aversion	Case study phone interview
Washington	Peer workers Direct enrollment into One-Stop programs	Site visit

### Exhibit 3: Map of Innovative Practice Sites



#### Site Visit States

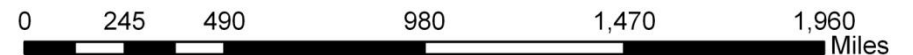
1. California
2. Florida
3. Minnesota
4. Washington

#### Case Study States & Layoff Locations

5. Concord & Kannapolis, North Carolina
6. Broomfield, Colorado
7. Old Town, Maine
8. Detroit, Michigan
9. Prairie, Mississippi
10. Herrin, Illinois
11. Dyersburg, Tennessee

#### Legend

- Site Visit States
- Case Study States
- Layoff Location



## **Innovations to Provide Better Information on Job Openings**

Re-employment of dislocated workers can be achieved only if workers know about job openings appropriate to their skills and knowledge. A number of Rapid Response teams developed new methods to identify job openings and link workers and employers, going beyond existing labor market information systems. Two innovative practices to provide such information, the development of specialized software with mapping capabilities and the use of employer organizations as intermediaries, are described below.

### **Featured Practice: Specialized Software and Mapping Tools**

The San Jose, California Workforce Board (for the local workforce investment area or LWIA composed of the city of San Jose and the central and southern portion of Santa Clara County) purchased a Web-based geographic information system called Geo Mapper to support the Rapid Response team (and other workforce investment staff) in conducting job searches soon after initial contact with dislocated workers.

The new software allowed staff to search within very targeted areas (such as a zip code or Census tract) or radii from the plant or worker's home for firms that had positions that matched the skills and occupational titles of workers affected by a specific dislocation. The Rapid Response team used information from the software in employee presentations and provided real-time information on firms that could use their skills.<sup>2</sup>

The software was developed by a combination of contractors and staff, initially using WIA administrative funds to support all programs. Subsequently, the LWIA obtained Governor's 15 percent and Rapid Response reserve funds to continue development and offer the software to other LWIAs in the state. The geographic information system was built on a Google Maps platform to accommodate additional tools. The local area customized the system through the purchase of databases from Dun & Bradstreet, one of the primary providers of business information on the market, as well as entry of its own data, such as WIA placement information. The program also linked a number of other proprietary and public databases. For example, one data source lists businesses in the region from 1990 to 2006, allowing staff to examine historical trends and attempt predictions. Data were also downloaded from other LWIAs to get a broader view of the regional economy and workforce.

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<sup>2</sup> California delegates Rapid Response to its local boards.

The system was easy to use and generated lists of employers in a matter of seconds. Customization of the reports was also simple. For example, the system could sort lists according to industry type or by proximity to a given location such as an existing employer or customer address at the block level. In addition, bus and commuter rail lines were embedded in the system, so job seekers could explore public transit options and driving directions.

### ***Potential Uses***

While the Geo Mapper software was used by WIA professionals during presentations and in conjunction with One-Stop programs, the workforce investment board (WIB) staff expected that the software would be used by some workers on their own and thus would allow Career Center staff to focus on jobseekers who needed more assistance. The WIB expected that the Geo Mapper would have other uses, such as for:

- Creating lists of employers for targeted job fairs with companies likely to hire employees from the pool of laid-off workers.
- Using historical data to identify companies that may be at risk of layoffs or closure in order to initiate layoff aversion efforts.
- Conducting longer-range industry-cluster analysis to identify trends in the rise and fall of industry presence in the region, and
- Forecasting the Silicon Valley economy far into the future.

### **Featured Practice: Use of Employer-Based Intermediaries**

The use of business intermediaries to assist in rapid re-employment was considered innovative because of the unique access such intermediaries could provide to multiple employers and specific job openings, as shown in the example from Broward County, Florida.

In Broward, three employer associations were under contract as full partners in Rapid Response, including a) the Southern Florida Manufacturer's Association, b) a health care association, and c) the Broward County Chamber of Commerce. The intermediaries supported rapid re-employment in several ways. For example, they provided member businesses with specific information on specialized workers soon to be dislocated. For example, when an office of Motorola closed, the Manufacturer's Association interviewed several engineers and found a Japanese electronics company relocating to the county to hire them. Similarly, when a furniture warehouse closed, the Manufacturer's Association brought in several of its members to hire dislocated warehouse workers. In some cases, workers were placed before the layoff actually occurred.

The employer intermediaries also facilitated rapid re-employment of laid-off workers by identifying firms for specialized job fairs focusing on employment opportunities that matched the skills of particular groups of dislocated workers.



## **Results**

The business intermediaries provided immediate job matching for dislocated workers and hiring firms, thus benefiting both sides of the labor-market transaction and the local economy. The Rapid Response coordinator noted that the matching was quick and highly targeted, thus creating labor market efficiency. The use of intermediaries whose members were themselves employers or who served a particular employer community thus gave dislocated workers access to reliable and immediate job listings, while the employers had access to a qualified worker pool to help meet their hiring needs. Using contracts formalized the relationships and demonstrated the Rapid Response team's commitment to the endeavor to match dislocated workers and employers quickly.

## **Innovations to Increase the Utilization and Quality of Services**

In the survey of Rapid Response coordinators for the evaluation, program enrollment was a highly ranked goal for most respondents. However, information about a complicated array of benefits and services can overwhelm workers at a time when many are in shock and may fail to use services that might be of benefit to them. The practices profiled in this section are innovative ways to a) connect dislocated workers more quickly and effectively with initial and subsequent services related both to finding new employment and to meeting other personal or family needs during unemployment and b) to enhance the quality of such services by use of competition and past performance information on providers.

### **Featured Practice: Mobile Units**

Mobile units have a growing reputation as an effective way to bring workforce services to job seekers who live in very rural areas that are distant from a comprehensive (or even a satellite) One-Stop Career Center, as exemplified in Mississippi, where the Rapid Response team had four mobile units. The mobile units were converted buses with satellite communications that allowed them to operate completely independent of landlines. Each bus contained 12 computer workstations equipped with internet access, printers, and fax machines. Organization of a process for workers to use the units was particularly important, especially for large groups, since each bus had space for only 12 individuals.

Even before the mobile units arrived on site, the Rapid Response team developed a customer flow plan and disseminated to the workers packets of information about One-Stop services and forms (such as the survey and information about their work and education histories) for the workers to fill out in advance. The team also provided résumé templates and Wagner-Peyser registration forms. This enabled the workers to save time and avoid congestion when they arrived at the units. In addition to assisting the team, such early preparation prepared workers for

the process and increased the likelihood that they would follow through in coming to future job searching activities at the One-Stop Career Centers.

The day the mobile units arrived on the plant site, workers assembled in small groups at a meeting room in the plant and moved from one “station” to the next as instructed by the Rapid Response team. At one station, the workers attended a workshop where One-Stop Career Center and community college representatives talked about retraining opportunities, eligible training providers, resumé services, and enrollment processes. Workers then moved to the mobile unit where they developed and printed out resúmes and with staff help, registered for Wagner-Peyser services, and co-enrolled into WIA and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA).

The mobile units were used in the Triton Boat plant closing, which took place in Prairie, a small, unincorporated rural community in Monroe County. Once the employer gave notice, the Rapid Response team made a presentation to workers and conducted a survey to determine workers’ interest in services. The results of the survey helped the team determine how many mobile units to bring and for how long. Among the 170 affected workers, many of whom lacked post-secondary education, the team found that job referrals and job search were the most desired services, and thus the state team decided to deploy mobile units on site to provide those services and introduce workers to One-Stop services.

Given the size of the Triton worker group, the Rapid Response team decided to use two units for two days estimating that average use would be about two hours. Ultimately, 120 workers were served. For larger layoffs, the team would either bring more units or leave the units on site longer, or both, as occurred in the Sara Lee layoff in West Point, Mississippi, where 1,200 workers had access to the mobile units for two weeks.<sup>3</sup>

## **Results**

Mississippi found that use of the mobile units contributed significantly to the number of dislocated workers who took advantage of Rapid Response services and enrolled in One-Stop programs. In the Triton Boat example, 70 percent (120) of the 170 laid-off workers were served. Overall, from February to December 2007, 1,256 individuals accessed services through mobile units, representing 16 percent of the 7,473 dislocated workers receiving Rapid Response services. The state Rapid Response coordinator said that without the mobile units, many of these workers would likely not have otherwise received services.

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<sup>3</sup> One problem with mobile units is that they are vulnerable to vandalism or theft. For that reason, the state team does not leave the mobile units onsite in rural areas. But if a plant has greater security, the units can remain for longer periods.

## **Featured Practice: Peer Counselors**

Peer counselors are dislocated workers themselves who are trained to help co-workers accept the reality of a job loss and to participate in readjustment activities. Peer counseling was initially developed in the early 1980s, under the assumption that workers would be more responsive to peers who were familiar to them, understood their situation because they faced similar challenges, and reached out to fellow workers on a one-to-one basis. Two examples of the use of peer counselors in large-scale dislocations are described here. The first site involved the shutdown of a Maytag plant in the small, rural town of Herrin, Illinois. The plant was the largest single employer in Williamson County and the nearly 1,000 workers laid off represented about 20 percent of Herrin's overall workforce. The second example involved a layoff of 1,000 security screeners at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport in Washington State, including a large number of immigrant Somali workers who had limited English proficiency.

In both instances, the employers were supportive of the effort and paid the peer workers during the notice period prior to layoff. After layoff, the peer counselors were typically hired by the AFL-CIO for 90 days to reach out to workers and enroll them in services.

In both states, peer counselors joined Rapid Response team members to present information at workshops before and after the layoff and encouraged fellow workers to take advantage of available services. In the Maytag/Whirlpool closure, peer counselors helped coordinate and conduct mass enrollments of workers into WIA and TAA, as well as a College Opportunity Fair, a Regional Day of Prayer, and a Silver Ribbon Campaign to boost morale and thank people for their services. In the layoff of airport security workers in Seattle, peer counselors were tasked with creating a newsletter to inform workers of available services and re-employment success stories.

Beyond simply informing their co-workers, peer counselors in Illinois were expected to advise and motivate them, assist them in enrolling in programs by helping to gather paperwork and fill out forms, assess the progress of workers, watch for signs of stress, monitor program attendance, and make referrals to other sources of assistance, such as local social service agencies participating on the Rapid Response team. Peer counselors were expected to act as advocates to ensure workers accessed the services in which they are interested and for which they are eligible. In Washington, peer workers knocked on doors, made phone calls and in any way possible made one-on-one contact to encourage workers to access services.

To prepare for these responsibilities, the state and/or local Rapid Response team trained the peer counselors on all of the programs and services offered by the state and local workforce systems and gave them lists of workers to contact and track.

Peer counselors also helped the Rapid Response team evaluate and improve processes. For example, in the Maytag/Whirlpool layoff in Illinois, peer counselors helped the Rapid Response team redesign the customer flow process to cut congestion during intake. Rather than assemble as many individuals as possible in one large room to conduct the whole intake process, peer counselors suggested using four separate smaller rooms for different phases of the process. Similarly, the peer counselors developed pre- and post-layoff checklists for workers to help them manage the many different tasks they needed to complete in order to enroll in and access One-Stop services.

In Washington, the Rapid Response team decided, based on observation as well as feedback from peer workers, to provide peer counselors with office space at the career center closest to the company, to help keep them connected to the workforce system. Prior to that, they had based their efforts solely at the company.

### **Results**

Both Washington and Illinois expressed confidence that peer workers increased participation in Rapid Response and service enrollment. In the Seattle airport layoff, 900 of 1,000 workers were contacted by peers during presentations, by phone, mail, e-mail, or home visits. In the four months during which layoffs were occurring, one-third of the dislocated workers were referred to the WIA Dislocated Worker program and more than half found jobs, either with the Transportation Security Administration or other employers.

Illinois data show that the average enrollment rate in WIA with peer counselor involvement was 61 percent, compared with 13 percent without such involvement. However, this is merely a descriptive statistic, and other characteristics of the two groups, beyond the involvement of peer counselors, may account for some of the observed difference.

Washington state administrators thought that the peer counselors were helpful beyond the layoff of the moment. In several cases, they were hired into the workforce system full-time, and continued to serve dislocated workers, drawing in part on their personal experiences.

### **Featured Practice: Use of Labor-Management Committees and Competitive Procurements**

Labor-management committees (LMC), pioneered over 25 years ago, serve several functions in a layoff, such as providing assistance tailored to the needs of workers; intervening early; coordinating project activities; and providing continued support and encouragement of worker participation in Rapid Response and other workforce services. Though LMCs are relatively rare nationally, Minnesota used them frequently and developed a unique role for them in selecting contractors to provide high-quality services.

Until recently, the unemployment rate in Minnesota generally was below the national rate, which placed a premium on using a mechanism to effectively connect dislocated workers to jobs. More than half of the population of the state lives in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, where most of the employment opportunities and Rapid Response service providers are located. This concentration of service providers facilitated competition for contracts to provide readjustment services to the LMC.

The Minnesota LMCs, called Employee Management Committees, typically included representatives from among the dislocated workers (ideally widely representative of the different types of positions), company management, and an independent chairperson from the business community and/or from the Rapid Response team. If the company was unionized, a union representative would be on the committee as well. The Committees were formed with the state Rapid Response team's assistance but thereafter operated independently and used a competitive process to select service providers. The assumption was that if committees were responsible for selecting Rapid Response providers they would likely choose providers most appropriate for the workers in the firm, and, as a result, more workers would take advantage of the services offered.

Minnesota routinely tried to form committees during all large dislocations. If at least 50 workers were interested, the Rapid Response team designated the event as a "project" and initiated the formation of a labor-management committee via agreement with the company (and union, if applicable) and solicitation of worker interest during Rapid Response presentations to workers. The Rapid Response team made an effort to recruit an array of workers representative at the affected company, but few enough to allow the committee to operate efficiently. Once the committee was formed, the Rapid Response team instructed it to apply for a \$5,000 Early Readjustment grant from the state. That initial infusion of funds allowed the committee to conduct a competitive process for selecting service providers. Funds for the service themselves were provided later.

The Rapid Response team served as an information broker, informing potential service providers that a committee had been formed and requesting expressions of interest in participating in the competitive process. Interested service providers received summary information on worker demographics, needs, and interests, collected from the worker surveys conducted during initial presentations, in order to tailor a proposal to the needs of the worker group. Simultaneously, the Rapid Response team provided the committee with scorecards that summarized service providers' past performance on the WIA performance measures for the three previous program

years. Providers earned “stars” for every measure (of the three Common Measures) for which they achieved more than 100 percent of the state’s negotiated goal.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, at a meeting resembling a bidders’ conference, service providers presented their plan to the committee regarding the services they would provide to the workers. The committee then chose a provider, and the Rapid Response team largely withdrew.

There were ten certified service providers that, together with the sixteen local WIBs, competed for the chance to win contracts and serve the workers. (Not all service providers bid on every opportunity.) The service providers included national organizations such as Jewish Vocational Services and Goodwill/Easter Seals, as well as regional economic development entities such as the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency. The services were financed with a combination of federal Rapid Response funds and state-specific Rapid Response funds. A project could range in cost from \$40,000 to \$250,000, depending on the number of workers served initially or utilizing training. The process for selecting a service provider was less competitive and sometimes was sole-source, when dislocations occurred in rural areas with fewer service providers. In these areas, the local WIB or One-Stop Career Center was likely the default recipient of the grant monies.

The competitive process had benefits and drawbacks. On the positive side, the committee was empowered to choose the service provider that best reflected the workers’ needs, which the state believed helped increase take-up of workforce services though no direct evidence was available to confirm this assumption. However, because the process involved multiple steps before services actually began, valuable time was lost before workers received services.

## **Results**

One of the primary ways Minnesota evaluated the results of the competitive process was through feedback from all parties involved. Minnesota used multiple opportunities for feedback from committee participants, service providers, and other partners to improve its entire Rapid Response process, which it described in state policy as a “work in progress.” For example, the Rapid Response team conducted follow-up with the committee to determine whether it was satisfied with the selected provider, and to troubleshoot problems, if necessary.

The follow-up process began two weeks after the provider was chosen. The Rapid Response staff administered a worker survey regarding the services and the provider. The team then shared this information with the provider no later than one week after the follow-up survey was administered, allowing the service provider the opportunity to adjust services if necessary. Exhibit 4 contains the follow-up survey used by the Minnesota Rapid Response team. The state

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<sup>4</sup> Scorecards were distributed to respective providers to verify that the information is correct.

has not attempted to measure explicitly the extent to which the committees and competitive process of selecting service providers increased worker take-up of workforce services or enrollment into One-Stop partner programs, although customer satisfaction surveys presumably provided some indication of whether the actual services provided met worker needs.

## Exhibit 4: Sample Follow-up Survey for Employee-Management Committee Members

Minnesota Dislocated Worker Program Rapid Response Follow-Up Survey for Employee Management Committee Members															
<b>Instructions:</b> Please circle the number that most accurately describes your experience (1= Poor and 5 = Excellent). Information you provide will be used to improve services to your group and future customers. No response will be individually identified. Please fully complete the form because your answer to each question is crucial.															
<b>Rapid Response Services (before you chose your provider)</b>			<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Poor</th> <th>Fair</th> <th>Satisfactory</th> <th>Good</th> <th>Excellent</th> </tr> </thead> </table>			Poor	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent					
Poor	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent											
1. TIMELINESS: How quickly did Minnesota's Rapid Response team respond to your layoff?			<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr> </table>			1	2	3	4	5					
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2. PRESENTATION OF DW: How well did staff provide you with program information and answers to your questions about the Dislocated Worker program?			<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr> </table>			1	2	3	4	5					
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3. PRESENTATION OF UI: How well did staff provide you with program information and answers to your questions about the Unemployment Insurance program?			<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr> </table>			1	2	3	4	5					
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4. FACILITATION: How well did staff facilitate the provider selection process?			<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr> </table>			1	2	3	4	5					
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<b>Dislocated Worker Services (after you chose your provider)</b>			<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Poor</th> <th>Fair</th> <th>Satisfactory</th> <th>Good</th> <th>Excellent</th> </tr> </thead> </table>			Poor	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent					
Poor	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent											
5. SPEED: How quickly were you able to meet with a counselor or attend a workshop?			<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr> </table>			1	2	3	4	5					
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6. QUALITY: What quality are the services provided?			<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr> </table>			1	2	3	4	5					
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7. CUSTOMIZATION: How individualized are the services?			<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr> </table>			1	2	3	4	5					
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8. CONVENIENCE: How convenient are the provider's hours and location?			<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr> </table>			1	2	3	4	5					
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9. KNOWLEDGE: How well does the provider seem to know your industry and current labor market conditions?			<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr> </table>			1	2	3	4	5					
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10. SPECIFIC SERVICES: Please rate the following services:			<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Not Offered</th> <th>Offered, but Not Used</th> <th>Poor</th> <th>Fair</th> <th>Satisfactory</th> <th>Good</th> <th>Excellent</th> </tr> </thead> </table>				Not Offered	Offered, but Not Used	Poor	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent		
	Not Offered	Offered, but Not Used	Poor	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent								
a. Job leads and job placement? (providing open jobs)			<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> </table>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5		
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d. Job search skills? (teaching you how to search for open jobs)			<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> </table>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5		
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e. Health insurance information?			<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> </table>				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5								
11. MEETING EXPECTATIONS: How well did your provider deliver what they promised in their original proposal?			<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Poor</th> <th>Fair</th> <th>Satisfactory</th> <th>Good</th> <th>Excellent</th> </tr> </thead> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> </table>			Poor	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	1	2	3	4	5
Poor	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent											
1	2	3	4	5											
12. RECOMMENDATION: Would you be likely to recommend this provider to other laid-off workers?			<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Not Likely</th> <th>Somewhat likely</th> <th>Very Likely</th> </tr> </thead> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> </tr> </table>			Not Likely	Somewhat likely	Very Likely	1	2	3				
Not Likely	Somewhat likely	Very Likely													
1	2	3													
<b>Comments</b>															
13. FEEDBACK: What other comments do you have regarding the Rapid Response and Dislocated Worker services you have received so far? (Use back of page if needed.)															
Thank you for your comments!															
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: small;"> <span>For office use only</span> <span>Event Name:</span> <span>Event Number:</span> <span>Start Date:</span> <span>Survey Date:</span> <span>RRT:</span> <span>UI:</span> </div> <div style="background-color: #eee; padding: 5px; margin-top: 5px;">Service Provider</div>															



## **Featured Practice: Enrollment into One-Stop Services, Coupled with On-Site Center and Use of Peer Counselors**

One final innovative practice to increase take-up of workforce services entailed efficiently enrolling individuals into multiple One-Stop services, coupled with using a nearby office and peer workers. While most Rapid Response teams simply proffer One-stop services and let workers decide for themselves what to access, in one dislocation in Illinois, enrollment in One-Stop programs was an integral part of the Rapid Response.

In the Whirlpool/Maytag layoff, workers were notified by mail of a date and time to attend intake sessions at the One-Stop Career Center nearby. Peer counselors helped by making follow-up phone calls to remind workers not to miss their appointment or to schedule make-up appointments if necessary, signing in workers on the day of the intake, and helping out during the process. To facilitate intake, workers were given instructions that listed each “station” they needed to stop at, including stations for sign-in, making copies of paperwork required for enrollment, filling out a WIA application, taking a test of basic skills, filling out an interest survey, and getting final sign-off of the completed file.

### **Results**

Orchestrating an efficient enrollment of workers into multiple workforce programs moved Rapid Response from an information-only service to one in which core and intensive services were initiated and provided. With the paperwork completed via a well-designed and smoothly-communicated process, workers were much more likely to take advantage of services to help them connect to the labor market, access training, or obtain needed supportive services. As a result of the Rapid Response team’s efforts, nearly 85 percent of the workers affected by the Maytag dislocation were enrolled in services.

## **Innovations to Address Community-Wide Impacts of Dislocations**

Large layoffs, especially in small communities or rural areas, often have effects that are both deep and broad. Dislocations affect families and public health, and economic effects ripple out to suppliers and others in the local economy. Local government can lose its tax base and be forced to reduce essential social services at a time when workers and their families may need those services most. Dislocated workers and their families may also experience physical and emotional problems, manifested in increased drug abuse, alcoholism, and depression, while the

loss of health insurance impairs their ability to cope with such illnesses. Isolation from social networks of co-workers and the workplace routine may inhibit effective job searching.<sup>5</sup>

State Rapid Response teams facing the challenge of addressing dislocations with broad community-wide impacts have developed holistic approaches that involve key community or regional partners, including elected officials, economic development agencies, social services, local businesses and associations, labor unions, faith-based and community organizations and others to address multiple and diverse needs of workers, their families, and communities. The practices featured below each entail innovative components as part of a community response model.

### **Featured Practice: Community Transition Team and Use of Committees**

The community response model is one that directly addresses and recognizes the community effects of dislocations through reliance on partners, who engage in high levels of coordination and collaboration and share resources and decision-making. The model differs from ordinary partnerships with community stakeholders by the high level of shared responsibility for addressing the wide array of worker and community needs. Consequently, while states that use this model may vary in its implementation or structure, the most innovative practices generally include coordination of a large number of community partners, each of whom fulfills a specific need that Rapid Response could not address alone. This is the case with the practice featured below in which the Southern Illinois Workforce Investment Board organized a committee-based community response team to manage a large layoff with broad community implications.

The December 2006 closing of Maytag/Whirlpool—a manufacturing plant that had been a major employer in Herrin in Williamson County, Illinois, for over 75 years—was a devastating loss for the surrounding community. As mentioned previously, it resulted in job losses for more than 1,000 workers in a rural area in the southern part of the state.

Illinois Rapid Response received notice a year in advance and met with employer representatives to gather information about the pending layoff. The team discovered that workers had few transferable skills, many had worked for Maytag/Whirlpool for most of their work lives, and relied on the company for health insurance. Because of these factors and the broad impact the

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<sup>5</sup> For the social, psychological, and health needs, see Stanislav Kasl and Sidney Cobb, “Some Mental Health Consequences of Plant Closing and Job Loss,” in Louis Ferman and Jeanne Gordus (eds.), *Mental Health and the Economy*, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, Kalamazoo, Michigan. (1979); T.F. McMahon, “From Social Irresponsibility to Social Responsiveness: The Chrysler/Kenosha Plant Closing,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 20:101-111, 1999; and Carl Van Horn, et. al., *Getting Back to Work: New Public/Private Strategies for Laid-Off American Workers*, Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Rutgers, State University of New Jersey, 2005.

closing would have on the area, the Rapid Response team decided to initiate a community transition team to address these challenges.

The first action in developing the community response was to recruit local partners. The Rapid Response team was able to garner support swiftly from community members, organizations, and agencies to create a community response because the executive director of the local workforce investment board had already developed good relationships with representatives from the mayor's office, economic development agencies, and educational institutions. In fact, she had previously been the dean of a local community college, which would be an important training provider for Maytag/Whirlpool dislocated workers. As such, the executive director took the lead in recruiting partners.

Community-transition team members, of which there were 60 at its height, included a wide cross-section of the entire community and its institutions. Exhibit 5 displays a sample of the specific and generic transition team members

**Exhibit 5:  
Herrin Illinois Community Transition Team Members**

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| • City of Herrin                 | • Illinois AFL-CIO   |
| • Other elected officials        | • Southern Illinois University   |
| • Southern Illinois Health care  | • Southern Illinois University Carbondale<br>Small Business Development Center |
| • Economic development           | • Community college  |
| • Community bank organizations   | • K-12 education   |
| • Social service representatives | • Ministerial Alliance   |
| • Health care professionals      | • Local church volunteers  |
| • Health insurance professionals |  |

Prompted by the need to address several key challenges that dislocated workers and the community would face, the Rapid Response team divided the broad community group into four committees focused on education, health care, job search, and social services. At the height of the activity, the transition team and each committee met monthly to coordinate campaigns.

One of the areas requiring the most attention was health care. Confusion around prescription and health insurance plans meant that many workers could potentially be turned away from pharmacies and doctor's offices. The transition team's health care committee worked extensively with providers, insurers, and non-profit organizations to keep workers and providers informed of workers' coverage and to ensure that workers and their families would receive care.

In addition, the committee held a community health fair and offered free flu shots and health screenings for workers and their families.

An objective of the Social Services and Resources Committee was to raise morale and community-wide support for workers and their families. Peer counselors, mentioned previously, coordinated with community members to organize a Regional Day of Prayer held in the Herrin Civic Center and attended by 300 individuals. The committee also held a Silver Ribbon Campaign to thank individuals for their support. Community businesses placed silver ribbons on their doors, and the community transition team wore blue ribbons to raise awareness of the plight of the dislocated workers. Another event sponsored by the Social Services committee was a school-supply drive in which community members donated supplies, which were not funded through WIA supportive services, to workers in training.

Finally, in addition to supporting both employment and other needs of workers and their families, this community transition team has been working to address the potential economic damage of the layoff for the larger community. Economic development partners and engineering students from Southern Illinois University teamed up to identify ways for the plant to be used after closing. Engineering students worked on future plans as part of a class project and members of the Rapid Response team offered potential buyers tours of the facility.

### **Results**

In this case, the Rapid Response team was faced with the closing of a plant that was the basis of prosperity in a small local area. The impact of the closing required a comprehensive community response to serve workers, their families, and to address the larger social costs for the region. As such, Rapid Response organized a wide array of community interests to address physical and mental health and financial needs of workers as well as economic instability in the larger community. Local expertise and clearly defined objectives for each committee furthered the collaboration.

### **Featured Practice: Community Service Center**

A second example of an innovative community response to large plant closings took place in North Carolina with the development of a community service center, run by community partners, to serve workers in one central location.

The 2003 closure of several Pillowtex plants not only affected nearly 4,900 laid-off workers, but also had tremendous impacts on the surrounding communities. The textile company had been the economic lifeline of the towns of Kannapolis and Concord in Cabarrus County since 1906. These two were company towns with low-rent homes, low utility costs, and free garbage collection provided by Pillowtex. The company also paid for basic municipal services including

police and fire protection, water and sewage, and a hospital and other community services such as a YMCA.

On July 30, 2003, North Carolina received notice that various Pillowtex plants would be closing that day. However, almost 75 percent of the workforce had already transitioned to part-time work by that time. The Rapid Response team reacted to these layoffs by providing informational presentations to groups of 300 workers around the clock, over two days in August 2003, in a facility donated by the company. Because the closing was trade-related, many workers were eventually enrolled in TAA.

In the case of the Pillowtex closure, the Rapid Response team faced several challenges that made an ad-hoc community response necessary. The most obvious challenge was the sheer size of the dislocation, which exceeded the capacity of a conventional Rapid Response effort and which would make re-employment difficult in this small labor market. Several other factors were expected to complicate the re-employment effort: Pillowtex workers were not highly skilled, often lacked a high school diploma, and had worked at the company for an average of 17 years. Finally, because of the company's dominance in the labor market, many families had more than one family member working at the plant. Loss of health care was another issue that caused concern for families. Ultimately, very few workers walked into the community service center for assistance with just one need.

Public and private sector agencies and faith-based and community organizations anticipated the Pillowtex plant closings and were able to quickly implement a community response. On August 6, 2003, only a week after the closing, these partners including the United Way, the Red Cross, the Centralina Workforce Board, the Department of Social Services, the Ministerial Alliance, and others opened the Community Service Center at Kimball Memorial Lutheran Church, located near the Pillowtex plant. Through the Service Center, Pillowtex workers could access services such as food, shelter, clothing, counseling and legal and financial assistance in one central location.

The community partners developed a process to introduce workers to the Community Service Center and increase take-up of its services. Two days before the Center opened, partners hosted informational sessions in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings at the Center. After each session, staff from the partner agencies conducted needs assessments with each attendee individually and set up appointments for them to meet with staff who could offer them services.

The Service Center was open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on weekdays for about one month, after which it scaled its hours back to 8:30 to noon.<sup>6</sup>

One critical factor for building rapport with workers was that the Service Center was located in a church. Partners chose this location specifically because they viewed residents of Kannapolis, and Cabarrus County, as church-oriented people and felt that this setting would comfort workers and their families, who were stressed and angry because of the layoff.

Because over a dozen community organizations and state agencies offered such a wide array of services at the Service Center, partners prioritized collaboration and staff cross-training to ensure seamless delivery of social services. Volunteers from the Red Cross staffed the Service Center, conducted intakes, and referred dislocated workers and family members to various services. Staff members from some participating organizations were also present to provide the services of their respective organizations on site. The collaborative held regularly scheduled training for all staff on Service Center policies, and staff met daily before the Service Center would open to update each other on emerging challenges and new protocols. The Department of Social Services often provided cross-training to staff from other agencies so they could assist in providing crisis services (for medication, rent, mortgage, insurance, and utility assistance) when needed.<sup>7</sup>

As with many dislocated workers, health care was one of the greatest needs of the former Pillowtex workers. Both Rapid Response and Service Center partners worked to address this need. When the Rapid Response team found that only 20 percent of customers were participating in the Health Coverage Tax Credit program because of high costs, the community partnership negotiated with Blue Cross/Blue Shield to reduce premium rates for workers participating in the program. In addition, various community partners worked to address other health needs. The Department of Social Services, with help from the Cooperative Christian Ministries, contributed resources to meet immediate and long-term health needs, including substantial help with prescriptions. In addition, staff contacted physician's offices to advocate continued care for the workers and ask them to use free samples to fill workers' prescriptions. Finally, Service Center staff referred workers to other community free clinics to access immunizations for children and dental care.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services Best Practices Awards. Category: Profiles in Community Collaboration. PCC#1 Project Title: Pillowtex Community Center. [www.ncacdss.org/ncacdss/events/2003\\_SSI/documents/01CabarrusPCC.doc](http://www.ncacdss.org/ncacdss/events/2003_SSI/documents/01CabarrusPCC.doc)

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>8</sup> City of Kannapolis News Release. Former Pillowtex Employees Health care Needs Met at Service Center

Another need met through the Community Service Center was legal assistance. Legal Aid of North Carolina helped workers file petitions in the Pillowtex bankruptcy proceeding for vacation bonuses that they had not received from the company.

While community partners were offering social services, the Rapid Response team was free to concentrate on enrolling dislocated workers in TAA and other employment and training services. Five months after the community service center opened, the Employment Security Commission established a companion to the Community Service Center by putting in a comprehensive One-Stop Career Center located close to the Pillowtex site. The two Centers maintained regular communication and referred individuals to one another.

Rapid response staff remained involved to coordinate re-adjustment efforts even after One-Stop re-employment services began. Their long tenure at the site contrasts with the more common pattern of most Rapid Response teams to yield responsibility to the local employment and training staff immediately after a presentation or once workers begin to enroll in program services.

## **Results**

Partner agencies and organizations quickly established roles and responsibilities and worked towards a seamless service delivery model. One United Way manager cited in a Pillowtex case study review by University of North Carolina researchers noted that “the integrated service delivery system was far beyond anything experienced before.”<sup>9</sup>

Partners’ coordination and proactive planning facilitated prompt creation of the Community Service Center within a week of the dislocation. Over 1,200 workers and family members attended informational sessions in the two days before the Service Center’s opening. In the first month that the Service Center was open, staff assisted an estimated 50 families daily. Two months after the dislocation, staff had already met with 1,232 families and provided \$217,000 in financial assistance for housing, health care, and utility expenses.<sup>10</sup> As of April 2004, one case study of the closing estimated that staff had conducted a total of 4,300 visits with dislocated workers and their families, and that the Service Center had used about \$1 million in funding and spent about \$30,000 a month on prescription assistance.

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<sup>9</sup> Myra Beatty, Douglas Longman, and Van Tran “Community Response to the Pillowtex Textile Kannapolis Closing: The Rapid Response Team as a Facilitative Device.” University of North Carolina, April 2004.

<sup>10</sup> North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services Best Practices Awards.. Category: Profiles in Community Collaboration. PCC#1 Project Title: Pillowtex Community Center. [www.ncacdss.org/ncacdss/events/2003\\_SSI/documents/01CabarrusPCC.doc](http://www.ncacdss.org/ncacdss/events/2003_SSI/documents/01CabarrusPCC.doc)

The community collaboration contributed to excellent take-up rates for workforce services. About two-thirds of the affected workers attended a Rapid Response orientation meeting, although they had already been laid off. Eventually, nearly all workers (97 percent of the 4900 that were laid off) enrolled in TAA, and 1,505 of them participated in TAA training (including remedial courses in basic education, GED, and ESL). Within several months of the closing, an estimated 500 former Pillowtex workers had already found other jobs.<sup>11</sup>

### **Featured Practice: Permanent Community Transition Teams**

At least one state has formalized a community response model to meet worker and community needs on a wide array of fronts. In an effort to better meet dislocated workers' multiple needs, state legislators in Maine in 2003 established permanent regional community transition teams across the state. Three active community response teams were established, and three other currently inactive teams were prepared to reassemble in the event of a dislocation. These teams leveraged the resources of local community members and organizations to provide a wider range of services to workers and their families. Team members typically included representatives from education, social services, employers, labor unions, community and faith-based organizations, and Rapid Response. Exhibit 6 lists the various groups that form Maine's community response teams.

#### **Exhibit 6 Maine Community Response Team Members**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community action programs such as family planning organizations, Head Start, and fuel assistance agencies</li> <li>• State and local elected officials</li> <li>• Representatives from local health agencies</li> <li>• Rapid Response representatives</li> <li>• Peer support workers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labor unions</li> <li>• Bank representatives</li> <li>• The community college system and adult education</li> <li>• Economic development</li> <li>• Local social service providers</li> <li>• Employers</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

The objective of the community response teams is to provide services beyond the scope of traditional Rapid Response, effectively increasing capacity to serve employment and non-employment needs of dislocated workers and their families and the community at large. Rather

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<sup>11</sup> Myra Beatty, Douglas Longman, and Van Tran "Community Response to the Pillowtex Textile Kannapolis Closing: The Rapid Response Team as a Facilitative Device." University of North Carolina, April 2004.



than having to spread their limited staff resources to address multiple priorities, Maine's Rapid Response team can concentrate on workforce services while the community team coordinates service delivery for other needs.

Below we highlight one particular case in which one of Maine's permanent community transition teams partnered with Rapid Response to leverage resources and serve workers and their families affected by the closure of a paper mill in Old Town.

When the Georgia-Pacific paper mill in Old Town closed in 2006, over 300 workers lost their jobs. This small town, with a population of over 7,700, is located about 140 miles northeast of Portland. Instead of issuing a WARN notice, the company paid workers for an additional eight weeks of work (the remedy under WARN) and laid them off immediately. Maine Rapid Response received notice of the layoff through the company's public announcement and so could provide services to workers only after they had been laid off.

At the initial worker presentation, the Rapid Response team conducted a survey, which showed that affected workers needed a variety of services. Consequently, Rapid Response enlisted the assistance of the community transition team to develop and fund a customized support strategy that went beyond what Rapid Response could pay for and deliver with WIA or other employment-program funding.

Members of the community-transition team offered services similar to those sometimes offered by many other Rapid Response teams, such as workshops on budgeting, pensions and retirement, stress, coping with change, and health care. In addition, the team developed a local resource guide to connect affected workers with community- and faith-based organizations, mental health services, veterans' services, adult education, and other social service agencies. Community team members also engaged in local fundraising to garner support for workers and their families. For example, the team held a holiday spaghetti supper, barbeques, and community fundraising events to help raise money to pay for workers' expenses not covered by the dislocated worker program's supportive services. The team used the funds it collected to pay for workers' expenses such as fuel assistance and school materials for their children.

In turn, Rapid Response provided job search assistance, career exploration and counseling from peer workers supported through a WIA National Emergency Grant. Finally, the economic development partners were able to find buyers who re-developed the plant into a pulp manufacturing facility, which resulted in substantial numbers of jobs for the dislocated workers.

## **Results**

Maine's community response model differs from the other models featured here because the transition teams are permanent. This was critical in responding to the sudden Georgia-Pacific closure because the team members were used to collaborating with each other, already knew

their roles and responsibilities, and were able to mount a quick response. In the past, team formation and planning took substantial time and resources.

Although Maine's Rapid Response coordinator was not able to provide quantitative data on the results of this community response effort, she noted that many workers were reemployed at the pulp manufacturing plant whose re-use was guided by economic development. Other workers received training, and still others found outside jobs and received the ATAA work subsidy.

In addition, the Rapid Response coordinator noted that while there is no formal evaluation process, outcomes for the different community transition teams vary. Some teams have much better communication and coordination than others due to the experience they have gathered from addressing large numbers of layoffs in their region.

## **Innovations to Engage Employers**

Public workforce policy has, for well over a decade, emphasized the need to serve the system's dual customers—jobseekers and employers. By continuously reaching out to and building relationships with employers, Rapid Response teams increase the chances that employers will allow Rapid Response teams ready access to workers when a layoff is imminent and provide information on new employment opportunities for those who have lost their jobs. Below are descriptions of how two Rapid Response teams were successful in engaging employers through the use of innovative practices involving partnerships with other public and private organizations that traditionally had strong relationships with businesses. These partners provided contacts with local businesses, knowledge of industries with growing labor needs, and capacity for community, workforce, and economic development efforts.

### **Featured Practice: Systematic Outreach to Employer Organizations**

Colorado developed an aggressive outreach campaign to encourage employer provision of advance notice of potential lay-offs, utilization of Rapid Response services, and identification of re-employment opportunities for dislocated workers, all through partnerships with organizations that have direct access to business. Building relationships over time and establishing mutual trust were key factors in making these partnerships successful.

Colorado developed strategic relationships with the Colorado Bar Association, several outplacement firms, and a television station. The Rapid Response team built a relationship with the Bar Association through personal contacts, which resulted in Rapid Response providing presentations about their services to Bar Association members twice a year, encouraging attorneys to educate employers expecting layoffs about Rapid Response services, and publishing one article a year on Rapid Response services in the Bar Association's journal. This partnership allowed the Bar Association's members to assist their clients--already in challenging situations

because of impending layoffs--to obtain free services for workers and cut down on transition-management costs. According to the state Rapid Response coordinator, since establishing this partnership several years ago, approximately 20 percent of employer referrals to Rapid Response now come from attorneys.

The Colorado Rapid Response team also established relationships with private outplacement firms such as Lee Hecht Harrison and Drake Beam Morin to provide complementary services to dislocated workers. The Rapid Response coordinator established this partnership by talking to the firms about services that the state could provide around education and employment, and agreed to respect boundaries by providing only the services not offered by the outplacement firms. As such, the state Rapid Response team provided specific workshops and longer-term services only for workers who no longer received services from an outplacement firm, after a contract has ended. This complementary partnership increased the capacity of the Colorado Rapid Response team to engage employers that generally did not access support from the public workforce system. In addition, the outplacement firms felt comfortable working with Rapid Response, perceiving the state's workforce services not as competition, but as a way to offer a wider array of employment services.

Finally, Colorado's Rapid Response team developed and maintained a strong partnership with a Denver television station to help with marketing the state's workforce services. Rapid Response staff participated on the station's Job-Line newscasts to inform jobseekers about employment openings, and the station automatically contacted the Rapid Response team if information was received from employers hiring more than 25 people. The station also provided free advertising for the state's Career Resource Fair. Overall, according to the state Rapid Response coordinator, the station provided \$400,000 to \$500,000 in in-kind contributions.

## **Results**

The Colorado Rapid Response team was able to form lasting relationships with the Bar Association, outplacement firms, and the Denver television station by striving to understand and respect other organizations' roles and responsibilities, being knowledgeable each organization, formalizing agreements, understanding partners' needs, and maintaining confidentiality. Colorado's efforts stand out as innovative because the state established multiple paths to employers. According to the Rapid Response Coordinator, the team's partnerships have led to an increased number of Rapid Response employment workshops, with an estimated 20 percent due to employer referrals from attorneys and about 25 percent due to its partnerships with outplacement firms. Finally, as a result of their aggressive outreach to employer-related organizations, about 80 percent of the state's Rapid Response activity comes from non-WARN dislocation events. Colorado's ongoing relationship with outplacement firms contrasts sharply with the information from the site visits where such relationships were episodic at best and other

research that indicates outplacement firms usually were suspicious of the public workforce system, which they viewed as a competitor.

### **Featured Practice: Collaboration with Other Public Agencies to Provide Incumbent Worker Training**

While some Rapid Response teams focus on coordinating with private organizations and community stakeholders, others forge strong partnerships with other public agencies whose mission is to engage employers. Increased collaboration with workforce system business services units and with economic development agencies can help avert some potential layoffs or help assure timely adjustment services for workers. Below are two successful examples of partnerships with other public agencies, in which the partners sought to identify employers that would be appropriate candidates for the states' incumbent worker training programs in order to prevent layoffs. One of the hallmarks of these two examples is the clearly-defined role for each party: the partner agencies recruit businesses, and Rapid Response connects them with training funds and layoff aversion services.

In 2006 in Dyersburg, Tennessee, Lennox Hearth Products, a manufacturer of fireplace accessories and air conditioners, was in the process of deciding to close a plant in either Tennessee or California to consolidate its production. A closure in Dyersburg would have affected at least 350 workers. This job loss would have been a severe blow to Dyer County, which then had an unemployment rate of about 6.6 percent and was generally concerned about the loss of its manufacturing base. At the state level, Tennessee had prioritized saving these manufacturing jobs through economic development programs and WIA incumbent worker training.

A second example comes from the Michigan Rapid Response team, which worked closely with economic development agencies that maintained contacts with employers, in order to offer incumbent worker training for layoff aversion. In early 2007, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation learned that Caraco Pharmaceuticals in Detroit was considering relocating its Michigan operations to North and South Carolina, which would offer more favorable labor market conditions. The move could have potentially affected around 300 workers.

The Tennessee Rapid Response team partnered with several public agencies, such as the state Employer Services Unit, which helped the team anticipate when companies were having difficulties, and the state's larger marketing group, called the Workforce Employer Outreach Committee, which had contacts with businesses in all the state's 72 counties. Led by state business services marketing staff, the committee met with about 25 to 50 employers quarterly to discuss various labor market and economic development issues pertinent to each county. The

Committee often invited the Rapid Response team to talk about its services, and committee members provide the team with information and referrals about businesses that were struggling. Tennessee's Rapid Response team used these partnerships as a source of potential candidates for the WIA incumbent worker training funds for which companies had to apply and which they had to match 100 percent. Funding priority was given to businesses whose proposals put forward a significant layoff avoidance strategy and would significantly upgrade worker skills. Lennox Hearth Products, which completed an application in 2006, won a grant for \$49,996 to train more than 350 incumbent workers in lean manufacturing, SAP software, industrial-maintenance skills, leadership skills, ergonomics, and safety awareness. Lennox Hearth did not close the Tennessee plant.

In Michigan, when the state Economic Development Corporation discovered Caraco's relocation plans, it immediately contacted the Rapid Response team to explore using funds for incumbent worker training and support services. To persuade the company to stay, a multidisciplinary team made up of staff from the Department of Labor and Economic Growth, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, the Detroit LWIA, Henry Ford Community College, and Wayne State University came together and held a series of meetings with the company. Together, this team developed a recruitment and training program to fit Caraco's needs. This program, coordinated by the Detroit LWIA, addressed pipelines for future employees and training for incumbent workers in the production of pharmaceuticals as well as basic job skill acquisition. In particular, Wayne State University and Henry Ford Community College committed to customizing their course offerings to train chemists and production workers for Caraco. The state added a \$4.9 million assistance package through its "No Worker Left Behind" program that offers up to two years of free tuition to unemployed, displaced, or low-income workers to pursue training in emerging industries.

## **Results**

Tennessee's Rapid Response funded numerous incumbent worker training programs for companies in the state. While the employer services unit and the Workforce Employer Outreach Committees were successful in identifying potential candidates for incumbent worker training, the program had gained such a positive reputation in the business community that marketing was no longer necessary. According to the director of the dislocated worker unit, 63 companies reported that they chose not to leave Tennessee for another state, at least in part because they received incumbent worker training funds. In addition, Tennessee calculates—based on employer reports—that about 4,452 jobs were saved as a result of the training.

In Michigan, the training and recruitment package that the state offered to Caraco Pharmaceuticals was crucial to the company's decision to stay in Detroit and build a new facility. In addition, the Rapid Response coordinator believes that the close relationship with the

Michigan Economic Development Corporation afforded the Rapid Response team more access to business customers. As such, the state also has a number of business contacts that are champions for the public workforce system and encourage their peers in the business community to utilize its services. While the team firmly believes that the partnership has brought about positive outcomes for employer engagement, respondents could not quantify the number of referrals of at-risk companies coming from economic development.

In both states, partnering with public organizations or agencies that have regular contact with business enabled Rapid Response teams to achieve some of their more challenging goals—to engage employers early in the process and avert layoffs, or obtain advance notification of them. The featured practices showed that layoff aversion is possible, particularly when needed funds for incumbent workers training are available. Second, maintaining successful partnerships requires carefully nurturing complementary relationships, with clearly defined roles and benefits for both parties.

## **Cross-Cutting Themes**

Several themes emerge from reviewing the innovative practices presented here. First, most involved collaboration with public and private organizations to increase the capacity of the Rapid Response team to respond to employer, worker, and community needs. Further, many of the Rapid Response teams responsible for these innovations invested significant resources in nurturing collaborative relationships and coordinating activities with other public and private entities. In some cases, these relationships solidified and became institutionalized, as with the community transition teams in Maine that are now permanent fixtures of Rapid Response in that state. But all these efforts began with a recognition that no one player has all the resources or answers for as complex a problem as worker dislocation.

Collaboration extended to Rapid Response operations also. Labor-management committees involved collaboration beyond the agency level by involving the employer and worker representatives or unions in the design and implementation of specific readjustment efforts. Peer counseling involved affected workers themselves acting as willing collaborators in marketing services to other workers and in so doing, expanding the reach of services in ways that would have been difficult or impossible for Rapid Response teams to undertake.

A theme related to collaboration is the importance of local customization. Local workforce staff and economic development entities often had more detailed knowledge than the state about local companies, worker needs, and the particularities of the communities. Such information was often vital to delivering effective Rapid Response. For example, in Tennessee, although the state typically made final decisions on the incumbent worker training grants, local areas scored applications and made recommendations about awarding grants.

Funding can have a major impact on the ability of state and local Rapid Response teams to experiment with and implement innovative practices. Many of the practices covered require an initial or ongoing commitment of funds, such as for the purchase of specialized electronic tools, contracting with intermediaries, providing funds for labor-management committees, specialized mobile units, or peer counselors. While about half the states set aside the full 25 percent of the state's dislocated worker allotment, these funds are often used for dislocated worker services at the local level and funds for richer or system-wide innovations may be relatively scarce.

Another cross-cutting theme concerns use of routine feedback to adjust and improve services to job seekers and employers facing layoffs and plant closures. Several of the innovations discussed here used surveys and related evaluative tools. For example, Minnesota built evaluation into its practice of funding labor-management committees and a competitive process of selecting service providers by use of past performance information and follow-up surveys about the services provided. Illinois solicited feedback from peer counselors in order to improve the services that the counselors and state team provided. Such feedback enabled these practices to improve over time, ideally resulting in positive impacts on the system's customers.

Finally, although feedback was often used to enhance the quality of services and processes, quantitative data documenting outcomes associated with each of the selected practices were relatively scarce. Rather, the primary data sources were practitioner perceptions regarding the usefulness of the practice in spurring rapid reemployment, full utilization of services, meeting community needs, and engaging employers. As was true with Rapid Response generally, data collection and customer tracking for these innovative practices were rarely systematic. More consistent data to demonstrate the effectiveness of these innovative practices would be helpful in identifying those most likely to lead to better outcomes for workers and employers -- and thus worthy of broader adoption.