11 County NoRTEC Region Brainstorms Ideas to Assist Businesses Impacted by COVID-19

The Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium (NoRTEC), is a consortium of eleven Northern California counties established to address the needs of job seekers and businesses in our region. The Modoc Alliance For Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) is a member of the consortium. With the increased questions and needs of business clients due to the economic shutdown, NoRTEC staff and Service Provider Directors have been discussing ways in which we might help support and enhance our business services throughout the NoRTEC region. NoRTEC together with private nonprofit 3CORE provided businesses in the NoRTEC region with a Business Recovery survey to identify and share the economic impacts of COVID-19 on their businesses. A total of 594 surveys were submitted with 70% (417) being received from small businesses with either no employees or less than 10 employees. Four committees of Business Service Representatives from throughout the NoRTEC region met virtually and utilized the survey data to provide recommendations to NoRTEC for the top business concerns in the following areas:

- Safety of Customers and Employees.
- Financial assistance programs available to businesses.
- Adapting business model and practices to new business realities.
- Virtual Job Fairs model and best practices.

The results of the survey will be used to advocate for the types of resources and assistance that are needed to help businesses and workers with economic recovery.
Social Media Strategies During Economic Shutdown

With the increased needs of our business clients due to economic shutdown, Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium (NoRTEC), staff and Service Provider Directors implemented an action plan to enhance and support our businesses throughout the NoRTEC region. Recent surveys indicated that an area that needed more light shed on it was adapting business models and practices to new business realities. A relationship was established with a north state firm; Kate & Company Marketing + Collaboration. Because NoRTEC listened to the business’s needs and in their continuing efforts to promote economic stability; small business owners in the north state region were invited to a series of no-cost Social Media Strategies presented by Kate & Co.

Social Media Marketing does turn sales. Facebook is the biggest of all the social networks, Instagram is second. 87.1% of U.S. marketers will use Facebook in 2020, and 75.3% will use Instagram. It’s a constantly evolving platform based on algorithm changes, new tools, and shifting demographics. Effective Facebook marketing requires an understanding of the latest Facebook statistics and how they apply to social marketing strategy. In three video sessions, Kate and her crew took attendees on an in-depth virtual look at social media marketing focused on how small businesses can break through the social media “noise” to create a strong and successful online game.

Video One: Social Media Planning – Three essential themes were addressed that dismantle personal challenges and support the creation of a solid social media action plan. Advice to construct a "business story," (aka brand), then they shared systems for a manageable posting plan, outlined effective evaluation techniques, and more.

Video Two: Social Media Content - Explored the social media content areas that provide small businesses with the best value and walked through proven practices that not only motivate and engage customers but also grow a digital presence.

Video Three: Social Media Hacks – Kate & Co pulled out all the stops in the final video, sharing countless game-changing hacks. They shared how to engage influencers and specific posting guidelines, using cross-promotion and helpful apps, and showcased all sorts of juicy insider tips. Then they proved its effectiveness by taking viewers on a virtual tour of six Northern California businesses to pull back the curtain on a unique collection of best practices and social media “wins.”
National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG)

The National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) temporary job creation program for the Winter Storms of 2019 entered a new phase of work this quarter with projects supervised by worksites from Caltrans, Modoc County and the Modoc National Forest becoming active. AFWD staff placed eight workers into temporary employment repairing and cleaning up storm damage at these worksites during this phase. The majority of the eight workers were long term unemployed individuals having been out of work for more than 15 of the last 26 weeks.

The NDWG temporary job creation program is targeted towards workers who have experienced a layoff, had their hours reduced due to the storm impacts or had been unemployed 15 out of the last 26 weeks and live in a storm affected area. This temporary work was designed to enable these previously unemployed workers to earn an income while adding to their skill set and also provides them the opportunity to network and learn about career opportunities within their worksite agency. AFWD staff will provide administrative and case management support for the workers and worksites during the project and job placement assistance to workers once the project is completed.
National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG)

In addition to offering the opportunity to earn income and gain new skills, the NDWG program offers temporary workers the chance for career exploration. Gary Smith came to the Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) office in Alturas searching for work. His primary career interest was law enforcement, but there were no current recruitment opportunities available. Gary’s previous work experience included hazardous fuels reduction, emergency response preparedness and community work for the elderly and needy. An AFWD Career Center Advisor suggested the NDWG temporary job program as a means for Gary to start earning income while he waited for an opening in law enforcement. It would also allow him to explore career possibilities with Caltrans as a possible alternative to law enforcement given his transferrable skills. Gary was agreeable and was selected for a 12-week NDWG temporary crew position with Caltrans repairing and cleaning up storm damage. During the course of his NDWG contract, a Correctional Officer position opened up with the Modoc County Sheriff’s Office. While Gary reported that he enjoyed his temporary position with Caltrans, he decided that a career in Law Enforcement was still the best fit for his interests. He applied for the Correctional Officer position and the employer confirmed interest in hiring Gary with assistance from the On-The-Job Training (OJT) program. AFWD will be partnering with the Sheriff’s Office through the OJT program to provide career advising support to Gary during his OJT. The Sheriff’s Office will also receive support during the OJT with a reimbursement of 50% of Gary’s wages during the 16 week training program.

Congratulations, Gary!
Assistance During COVID-19

While unemployment benefits are available for those impacted by Covid-19, delays in receiving those benefits have resulted in some unemployed workers falling behind on their bills. Bessie Deneault found herself in this position. She had been laid off from her beloved position as a Waitress/Cook at the Wagon Wheel Restaurant in March due to the COVID 19 Pandemic. She applied for unemployment benefits soon after her layoff, but her claim was initially denied requiring her to file an appeal for reconsideration. She contacted the Modoc Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) office requesting assistance with her unemployment claim after being unable to reach EDD by phone. Staff was able to help her obtain an updated status and to provide her with information about the Dislocated Worker Supportive Service COVID19 Impacted Grant. This grant provides funding for expenses such as Child/Dependent Care, Housing Assistance, Utilities as well as other expenses for those impacted by Covid-19. A Career Center Advisor determined that Bessie was eligible for assistance under this grant for her past due utility bills as she had exhausted her savings and had no other resources available since her unemployment benefits had not yet been approved.

In addition, Bessie was unsure if she would be able to return to her previous position at the Wagon Wheel due to Covid-19 concerns. AFWD offered Bessie virtual workshops for job searching and updating her resume and assisted her with completing an online Interest Profiler to determine other career possibilities that would be a good match for her. AFWD will continue to work with Bessie to determine the best career pathway for her future.
GO Naomi!!!

Living in Alturas California all her life, Naomi Wallis has always appreciated her small town. However, living in a small town does have its challenges. Naomi was unable to finish her high school diploma and recognized how important it was to try and obtain one. Yet, it wasn’t until last year that Alturas had an adult education program. Needing a job and not having a diploma seriously reduced her employment options. Naomi was one of the first students to enroll in the HiSET program. Since then, she has had some delays due to COVID, but has continued to look for employment. Recently the local Grocery Outlet posted a cashier position and Naomi applied. Working with her Youth Career Advisor, Naomi had a professional resume and had obtained effective interviewing skills. These skills proved helpful in impressing the owners, Adrienne and Jeff Moore. They were interested in hiring Naomi as they liked her bubbly personality, but she would need training. The Business Service Representative stepped up and suggested and explained the possibility of an On-The-Job training. The Moore’s agreed that it would be an excellent idea. They compiled a list of skills that Naomi needed to know to be an effective employee and determined an appropriate length of training. Naomi was assisted by CalWORKS in obtaining new work clothing. On September 15th, Naomi started work and is really enjoying it. Naomi plans on continuing to work on her HiSET but is excited that she has reached her other goal, employment!
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**Modoc County**

- **One-Stop Visitors:** 177
- **Businesses Served:** 18
- **Business Services:** 105

**AFWD**

- **Clients Enrolled:** 130

**Unemployment Rate**

(As of: August 2020)

- 6.8%