

Workforce Investment Works: Submitting a Story *Working for Minnesota*

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Why tell stories?

If your funding went away would your community care? This was a question that I posed to a group of enthusiastic non-profits during a communications session at a recent conference. And, there was a very long pause. Finally, one participant commented, “But our mission is really important. Why wouldn’t people support us?”

In a crowded field of over 1.8 million non-profits, don’t assume that your mission has value among your community stakeholders. Your organization competes for market position just as your private sector counterparts, and it requires telling great stories as often as possible.

There are a couple of critical mistakes that I see when working with non-profit and government agencies and their various communication mediums, including Websites, marketing materials, press releases and social media tools.

1. There is a propensity to talk more about funding streams than actual impacts in the community.
2. There is a tendency to communicate about program guidelines versus value propositions for the customer and the community.
3. There is an over-emphasis on organizational structure and functions versus sharing the specific actions undertaken by the organization to improve the community.



The concept of the Workforce Investment Works Minnesota Campaign is very simple —create a storytelling site to help Minnesota policymakers and stakeholders understand the value propositions of the Workforce Investment System. This means reporting more than just performance metrics; it’s putting a human face to who we are and what we do through the eyes of our customers.

The stories that are generated for the Workforce Investment Works Campaign at the local and state levels will benefit your workforce organizations as you post them to your Website, share them with your legislators and stakeholders and use them as a promotional tool to engage customers and partners with your important mission.

This tutorial will assist you in creating a good story, as well as provide logistical information as to how to upload your story to the site.

How do you create a good success story?

The best success stories are simple and to the point. Here are guidelines for developing a good customer success story.



Making the Ask

When you have a customer that has achieved great results and is pleased with the services, it's time to make the ask. A good way to frame this is as follows:

(name of customer), as you know we are very committed to our mission of workforce development. One of our biggest challenges is that we don't have large budgets for outreach that informs others, like yourself who are in a similar situation, and need to know that we are here for them. One of the ways we get

the word out is to interview our successful customers—folks like you who have gotten a great result through our services. I'm wondering if I can interview you for a story that we can use for external promotions. This may include things like our brochures, Website, news stories, etc.

Media Release Form

If the customer agrees, then you will want to have them sign a media release form. If your organization does not have a release form, there are many examples found on the Web. We recommend that you do an Internet search for "media release forms" and select one that meets your needs. The release form is a pre-requisite for submitting your story to the Workforce Investment Works Campaign Website and you will want to keep these on file.



Capturing your Story

Your organization may have video cameras or other multi-media tools available to capture the story live. If not, then the story can be transcribed on paper. Confirm the correct spelling of the participant's name, and then proceed with the following interview questions.

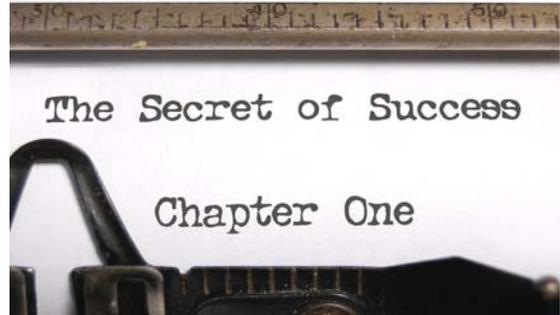
Video Interview Questions



- 1) Tell me your name and where you're from.
- 2) Tell me about what originally brought you into our One-Stop? (this is to garner information about their challenges/issues)
- 3) What services did you find most helpful in overcoming these challenges?
- 4) What was the best part about our One-Stop?
- 5) What have been the results of working with us to overcome your challenges?
- 6) What would you like to tell others who may have not heard about our One-Stop Center but find themselves in a similar situation?

Questions for Written Story Format

- 1) Tell me about what brought you into our One-Stop. (The purpose is to garner information about their challenges/issues)
- 2) What *services* did you find most helpful in overcoming these challenges?
- 3) What have been the *results* of working with us to overcome your challenges?
- 4) What would you tell others like you about our One-Stop Center?



Professional Videos

If your organization has hired a company to produce a professional video documenting customer success stories, you can submit the video on the WIW Minnesota site. Instructions are below.

Transcribe and Upload your Story

Once the customer's story has been captured either on paper or on video, you are ready to transcribe and submit your story online in the Workforce Professionals section of the Campaign Website. Click the [Workforce Professionals](#) link in the footer of the Home page or in the right column of all other pages. This will take you to a form containing the following sections.



- 1) **Information About You & Your Workforce Organization** – fields to input your name and contact information.
- 2) **Customer Information** – fields to input the customer name, type of customer (i.e. business, youth, jobseeker) and verification that you have a media release form on file.
- 3) **Customer Story** – Briefly describe the following a) the *challenge* the customer faced prior to getting services from your workforce organization; b) what the workforce board/One-Stop *provided* to the customer to help them overcome their challenge(s); and c) the *actual result* the customer obtained as a result of the services received. There are many examples of brief and effective stories on the national-level WIW Campaign site, located at <http://www.workforceinvestmentworks.com>
- 4) **Upload photo and/or video (optional)**
 - a. If you have a photo for this story, please send the image to aolson@mncounties.org or provide a URL where we may view and download the image. Please indicate the name of the customer when you submit the photo or the URL.
 - b. If you have a video for this story, please provide a URL where we may review the video, (i.e. YouTube link, or a link on your Website). Once we review the video, we will call or email you to make arrangements for obtaining the video. If you do not have a link where the video may be reviewed, you can send it to us at aolson@mncounties.org. Please note that given the size of video files, you may need to use a free service such as YouSendIt.com which will allow for emailing large files.
- 5) Click **submit**.

You will receive an email confirmation and a notification once your story has posted to the site. Technical questions or assistance with story development is provided through the [Workforce Professionals](#) section.

Submission Options

There are three categories of success story submissions within the Workforce Investment Works: Working for Minnesota campaign. These are: Stories, Testimonials, and Innovations.

Success Stories reflect the way one individual or one business has accessed workforce-related services and obtained a positive outcome. They are in a “Problem/Solution/Outcome” format as described above in the process of obtaining a customer story.

Testimonials are “sound bites” or quotes from an individual or business that has had a positive experience within Minnesota’s workforce system. Testimonials are submitted as a direct quotation from the individual, and there is not a need to provide any background with regard to the problem the customer was facing or the services that were accessed. The quote should speak for itself.

A *Workforce Innovation* or Board Innovations is a success story that falls under broader program successes affecting more than one business or job seeker (a regional consortium; an annual event that supports hiring needs of local industry; an outreach program that was developed using specialized funding). Stories about these programs communicate an overall approach and philosophy more than a customer-level problem/solution/outcome. Workforce Innovations should show the ways that business and industry, educational providers, and workforce organizations are coming together to align business needs with jobseekers and workers.

Technical assistance with determining the appropriate category for your submission is available by email at support@workforceinvestmentworks.com