

2003 NATIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE AWARDS PROGRAM  
Nomination Entry Form

I. IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION

State Workforce Agency: Virginia Employment Commission

Name of State Contact: James W. Jacobs

Title: Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations

Address: P.O. Box 1358, Richmond, VA 23218-1358

Telephone: 804-786-3004

Fax: 804-371-8697

E-Mail: bjacobs@vec.state.va.us

Name of State Administrator approving the nomination:

Dolores A. Esser, Commissioner

.. GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of Program/Project Nominated: Coordinated Economic Relief Centers (CERC's)

Nomination Category

(Check only one. Use a separate form for each nomination entered.)

Innovation – Architect of Change

Collaboration – Pyramid

Tools and Technology – Compass

Professional Development/Capacity Building – Building a World-Class Workforce

Excellence in Serving Business – Prism

Month/Year Initiated: March, 2002

Is the nomination for:      statewide program?       local program?

If local, please provide the name of the locality: Established in four locations: Clarksville, Martinsville, South Boston, and Marion, Virginia. \_\_\_\_\_

### iii. RESOURCES

Total Start-Up Costs: total for all CERC locations	Direct: \$147,849 (estimated) Indirect: costs not available	Fund Source(s): W-P, WIA, UI, other agency funding
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Total On-going Annual Costs: Total for all CERC locations	Direct: \$324,802 (estimated) Indirect: costs not available	Fund Source(s): W-P, WIA, UI, other agency funding
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If the project is receiving other non-financial support from public or private partners, please identify the organization and describe the type of support. In-kind services provided by partners at the CERC locations.

### IV. SYNOPSIS (Narrative Section)

Attach a brief synopsis (**no more than one page - 12 pt. type**) including:

- The basic service(s) provided by the nominated program/project.
- The outstanding accomplishments/successes.
- The reason(s) the nomination should be considered for a national award.

### V. CRITERIA INFORMATION (Narrative Section)

Attach responses to each of the four criteria information requested below (V. a, b, c, and d). This section must not exceed four pages (12 pt. type) in total.

- Project Basis
- Project Operation
- Use of Award Funds
- Project Results

*IV. (a).* The CERCs were established by the Governor's Strike Force and have proven successful in bringing together multiple private and public service partners at single sites to provide much needed services to Virginia citizens in economically distressed areas. The CERCs serve as a single point of entry to provide affected workers and their families with immediate access to the services they need. The CERCs provide a convenient, one-stop, coordinated approach to service delivery. Instead of visiting several different agencies and organizations trying to find services, affected workers and their families are able to come to one place, the CERC, and find the assistance that they needed. CERC partnerships that bear highlighting: The following services are provided to the customers of the CERC one-stops: Information and services for employment opportunities with local companies; i.e., job search assistance services, Assistance from private and non-profit organizations (e.g., Tech Riders, Virginia Health Care Foundation, Local Community Service Boards, United Way), Assistance from church and mission-oriented organizations, Intake for unemployment insurance claims, Community college workforce training programs, Tuition assistance and financial aid, Dislocated worker services, Monthly cash assistance payments, Child and family healthcare insurance (FAMIS), Assistance with emergency medical bills, Childcare assistance, Food stamps, Cash payments for fuel assistance and Workforce Investment Act services.

*IV. (b).* Unprecedented partnerships between State and local governments, non-profit organizations, private sector service providers, and the church community united to provide assistance to workers and their families. The CERCs provide a bridge to the various levels of government and embraced private sector opportunities to offer a unique approach to providing assistance. The Governor's Strike Force worked with local officials to ensure that the services being provided complement rather than interfere with local efforts.

When an individual enters a CERC or calls a CERC toll free number for the first time, a counselor at the center assesses that individual's specific needs. Information needed to assess job benefits, health care, education, training and social service needs is obtained in order to make referrals to the appropriate public and private sector organizations. Additional value-added benefit comes from the ability to design assistance around the range of needs of each individual. The CERCs use a case management type approach, to ensure affected workers' and their families' needs were being met. Service providers meet periodically to determine what assistance had been offered and any follow-up that was needed.

*IV. (c).* This nomination should be considered for a national award because the success of the CERC concept is directly due to the Governor's leadership, and the sense of urgency and purpose generated by the Governor and Secretary of Commerce and Trade and cooperation with local officials. The intent and original policy outline for the One Stop Centers actually calls for a model that shares many of the best practices of the CERCs. However, in current practice, the One Stops are not living up to the original WIA plan. The Governor's workforce vision, is that the One Stops must operate above and beyond WIA, like the CERCs.

*V. (a).* During the recent economic downturn communities throughout the commonwealth have been encouraged to provide local and state agencies with a list of concerns relating to employment and economic conditions, and any particular service provisions lacking in those communities. As a result of the input provided, in February of 2002, Virginia's Governor issued an executive order establishing a working group of state agency representatives to address the economic crisis faced by those communities that were losing large numbers of jobs, primarily in the textile, furniture, and other manufacturing areas. The group was directed to establish CERC locations in affected communities to serve as single point of contact for dislocated workers, their families, and other low-income members of the community.

*V. (b).* The CERCs are staffed with experienced staff from the VEC and partner agencies. When an individual first enters a CERC or calls the toll free number for the first time, a counselor at the center assesses that individual's specific needs. Information needed to assess job benefits, health care, education, training and social service needs is obtained in order to make referrals to the appropriate public and private sector organizations. An extensive media campaign was undertaken to alert the citizens of the Additional value added benefit comes from the ability to design assistance around the range of needs of each individual. Each CERC uses a case management approach, to ensure affected workers' and their families' needs are being met. Service providing partners meet periodically to determine what assistance has been offered and what follow-up contact and/or services are needed. Results of customer surveys provide staff with quality input, plus the close monitoring and evaluation of the results by the VEC, partners and state officials will be able to ensure the efficient implementation of customized services for future CERC operations.

*V. (c).* Award funds would be used to expand the services available in the existing CERCs, or for costs associated with the start-up of new CERC sites when indicated by the economic conditions of a particular area of Virginia.

*V. (d).* Customer and staff feedback from the four CERCs have indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the results of this initiative. Customer surveys indicate that lessons learned from implementation of the CERCs are likely to be especially helpful in planning One-Stop initiatives that are located in fairly rural communities, where the volume of customers is likely to be similar to that experienced by the CERCs.