

I. IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION:

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II. GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of Program/Project Nominated: South Plains Nursing Education Community Coalition
Nomination Category: Prism Award
Month/Year Initiated: Jan/2001
Is the nomination for: local program
If local, the name of the locality is: 15 counties of South Plains WDA of Texas

III. RESOURCE

Total Start-Up Costs: Direct: \$1,682,210
Fund Source(s): DOL Grant
Indirect: \$827,442 (in-kind and match)

Total On-going Annual Costs: Direct: \$1,248,178
Fund Source(s): DOL Grant
Indirect: \$1,040,947 (in-kind and match)

IV. SYNOPSIS (Narrative Section)

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V. CRITERIA INFORMATION (Narrative Section)

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IV. SYNOPSIS

The focus of the South Plains Nursing Education Community Coalition (SPNECC) is to meet the nursing shortages in the South Plains area by the recruitment of students, the retention of nurses in the profession, the advancement of nurses up the career ladder, and the promotion of the nursing profession. The education opportunities include courses for Certified Nurses Aid (CNA), Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN), Registered Nurse (RN), Bachelor of Science Nursing (BSN), Master of Science Nursing (MSN), and Doctor of Philosophy Nursing (Ph.D).

One key accomplishment of the coalition is the fact that the four nursing schools in the area now are working together for the first time to provide information about choices in nursing education and the advantages of the nursing profession to South Plains residents. When recruitment efforts take place from any of the schools, information is given about all of the nursing schools and the entry prerequisites and requirements for each. The success of this approach shows that everyone benefits from the enlarged scope of information presented.

The recruiters have made over 32,000 contacts this year alone. The SPNECC's project results in the South Plains region so far has been:

- an increased number of applications for the four nursing schools,
- increased enrollment in the four schools,
- nine new nurse educators to teach the additional students,
- an increased public awareness of the nursing shortage,
- community partnerships that support the nursing initiatives with in-kind publicity, information dissemination, and referrals, and
- increased distance learning in the RN-BSN programs.

The two major hospital systems in the South Plains are also members of SPNECC. Through their tuition reimbursement and flexible work hours, nurses are able to work at the same time they are completing the next step in the nursing career ladder.

WorkSource of the South Plains became a member of SPNECC when they wrote a Department of Labor (DOL) grant for nursing education. American State Bank is the newest member of SPNECC by initiating a nursing scholarship trust fund that benefits coalition schools. They realize the importance of addressing the nursing shortage through community efforts and business partners.

SPNECC contains all the elements of a program that can be successfully replicated. The partners may vary; however, the underlying principals of collaboration and commitment to a vision are strong components that will work anywhere towards solving nursing shortages.

CRITERIA INFORMATION

A) Project Basis:

The South Plains Nursing Education Community Coalition (SPNECC) began with six members of the health education and health delivery community, brought together by a mutual desire to promote nursing on the South Plains and to discuss regional, state and national nursing issues. Four area nursing schools, Texas Tech University Health Sciences (TTUHSC), Covenant School of Nursing (CSN) South Plains College (SPC), and Lubbock Christian University (LCU), plus the two major hospital systems, University Medical Center (UMC) and Covenant Health System (CHS) were the original members.

Due to the alarming nursing shortage, the local Workforce Development Board, WorkSource of the South Plains, joined the coalition in 2001 when they wrote a Department of Labor (DOL) Technical Skills Development Grant for nursing education. The grant was funded in June, 2002 for \$2.9 million dollars and included all the members as active partners in the grant. Additional community partners, Market Lubbock, Inc., the local economic development entity, the City of Lubbock, and the seventeen member Community Workforce Partnership, were in-kind partners through the grant.

American State Bank joined the coalition as a member in February, 2003, when they initiated a nursing scholarship trust fund that included the coalition nursing schools.

The 2-year DOL grant funded \$1 million in scholarships for new students and \$950,000 for new nurse educators to enable the schools to increase their student capacity. The statement of work promised 240 new Registered Nurses (RNs) on the South Plains as a result of grant funds. Recruitment and outreach were major components of the grant, including the 15 counties of the South Plains area.

Over 17 community partnerships were formed to facilitate recruitment, publicity, and generate an awareness of the nursing shortage. The members of the coalition plus the community partners contributed over \$2 million of in-kind and matching funds.

The nursing shortage has escalated over the last ten years. Hospital vacancy rates for RNs already average more than 12%. In specialty areas, vacancy rates are much higher. National population growth over the next twenty-five years is predicted to increase about 39%, yet the state of Texas is predicted to grow at 85%. In addition, nursing schools have been forced to turn away qualified students because of insufficient nursing faculty and the problems are expected to worsen.

Every level of the nursing pipeline, Certified Nurses Aid (CNA), Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN), Registered Nurse (RN), Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), Master of Science in Nursing (MSN), and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D), is in high demand. The benefits of establishing and promoting the nursing career ladder is that, once started, even at the lowest level, each step is highly attainable and a nursing student can work in their field while they are going to school.

B) Project Operation:

The implementation part of the grant was assumed by the education institutions. Each school was funded for scholarships and new nurse educators to handle the influx of additional students. Recruiters were hired from each school who work as a team to disseminate information about the nursing profession, the requirements of the coalition schools, the availability of scholarships, and the advantages of each program. They also build community relationships and partnerships through participation in area events. To date they have made over 32,000 contacts.

Even though the primary focus is on RN education, entry into nursing along all levels of the nursing pipeline is encouraged.

SPNECC partnered with Market Lubbock, Inc.'s Regional Bio-Science Initiative and sponsored an Invention Contest for regional school children 5-12. Also a big Button Design Contest was held for children from K-4th grade and was designed to promote the idea of nursing and the nursing profession into the lower grades.

“Are You Man Enough...To Be A Nurse?” is the name of a poster that will be distributed across the South Plains. Most ages and cultures were represented on the poster to address the gender gap that exists in nursing and will be a visual representation of the idea that manly men of all ages and cultures are members of the nursing profession.

C) Use of Award Funds:

The award of \$25,000 would be used for additional in-depth nursing workforce needs assessment to be conducted specifically on the South Plains. This fifteen county area has recently undergone a healthcare shift as one of the largest healthcare providers, Covenant Hospital System, faced drastic budget shortfalls and was forced to make adjustments to their business. Several rural health clinics and hospitals were affected as well as the main hospital in Lubbock.

A new Heart Hospital is currently being built in Lubbock. The need for an additional qualified nursing workforce will soon be intensified. The State of Texas has also undergone a major readjustment of funding state agencies that affects the state supported nursing schools in the Nursing Coalition as well as government health related services.

One question that needs to be addressed in the needs assessment is the cultural, racial and gender diversity in nursing. Area attitudes can be explored and then measures taken to break preconceptions of the nursing field to open it to populations that had not considered it before. Another area that needs to be analyzed is the growing population of elderly in the region. An assessment of their needs and the forecasts of the region in 10 years will be most valuable. The needs assessment would include a survey of the South Plains' area hospitals, home health, nursing homes, clinics, and nursing schools. The South Plains Nursing Education Coalition will develop the survey questions.

D) Project Results:

The SPNECC's project results in the South Plains region so far has been:

- an increased number of applications for the four nursing schools,
- increased enrollment in the four schools,
- nine new nurse educators to teach the additional students,
- an increased public awareness of the nursing shortage,
- community partnerships that support the nursing initiatives with in-kind publicity, information dissemination, and referrals, and
- increased distance learning in the RN-BSN programs at TTUHSC and LCU.

A web-page has been designed and set up on the TTUHSC web-site with links to all the coalition schools and partners; coalition projects and the coalition newsletter are also posted.

The recruiters have visited the 15 counties in the South Plains Region to disseminate coalition information. They visit workforce career centers, schools, rural hospitals and nursing homes. The public is being informed that nurses make a living wage, are able to choose the hours they work, and have more control over their own destinies and there are over 31 different types of nursing specialties.

The scholarships offered through this project have created a tremendous opportunity for people of all economic levels to enter nursing training or attend graduate school. While a lot of attention is focused on low-income populations, this project has provided scholarships for middle class students as well. These funds were the main impetus for many students to be able to take the next step in their nursing education. So opportunities were found for individuals that significantly improve this area's nursing shortage.