



Stacie Sevigny

Executive Director, Walsh County Job Development Authority

What is the ND Career Builders Program? The ND Career Builders Scholarship & Loan Repayment program is a tool for businesses to recruit and retain talent in high-need occupations in ND. This unique partnership provides \$1 of state funds for each \$1 of matching funds, up to a total of \$17,000 per recipient! Individuals can receive a scholarship on the front end, loan repayment on the back-end, or both, for their commitment to the state to fill one of the high demand occupations.

Let's chat with Stacie about her experience with the program!

Q. Please tell us your title and role at your organization.

A. The Walsh County JDA is the economic and community development organization for the county. The organization's board of directors represents various sectors of the county as defined by ND Century Code, including city governments, the county commission, townships, ND Job Service, the private sector, etc. As Executive Director, I assist in the organization's mission to support economic and community development projects by working with individuals, local organizations, businesses, governments, and entrepreneurs. This includes enhancing human capital, developing community infrastructure, talent attraction and retention, housing, childcare, and assisting in business development and expansion.

Q. Tell us about your organization's involvement with the ND Career Builders Scholarship & Loan Repayment program.

A. The Walsh County JDA Executive Director and Fiscal Manager manage the Walsh County Career Builders Program (WCCB), which has a separate board of directors represented by the funding partners. This program provides matching funds to help local businesses and public organizations utilize the ND Career Builders (NDCB) program by reducing the required employer match for each eligible employee. For example, if a business hires an employee eligible for the student loan repayment program who is eligible for the maximum \$17,000, typically the amount is split equally between NDCB and the employer, \$8,500 each. The WCCB splits that \$8,500 with the employer 50/50 so the employer pays \$4,250 and WCCB pays \$4,250 over three years. The WCCB is supported by funds from the WCJDA, City of Grafton Economic Development, and City of Park River Economic Development.

Q. What is your organization's greatest benefit in using the ND Career Builders program?

A. The WCCB has assisted employers – large and small – with their employee recruitment and retention efforts. For example, reducing the required match for employers has allowed many of them the opportunity to offer the student loan repayment program to multiple employees.

Q. How has the ND Career Builders program helped your recruitment & retention efforts?

A. We have heard from employers who are recruiting employees that receive multiple job offers, that the NDCB / WCCB programs have been what tipped the scale for the employee to choose their organization's offer. Additionally, for employers in the medical field specifically, the program has been an excellent retention tool for employees looking to advance their career by furthering their education to accept a new position at the same facility requiring a degree they do not currently have.

Q. What would you tell other organizations thinking about using the program?

A. This is a program you should be working with businesses to utilize for employee recruitment and retention. Walsh County is a rural county and yet has had significant success with 35+ job placements in less than two years.

Q. What would you tell students or employees who are considering committing to the program and to ND?

A. This program is an opportunity to make a profound impact on your professional, but also your personal life, in a very short amount of time.

Q. In your opinion, why should organizations and/or businesses invest in North Dakota's workforce to keep young adults in the state with programs like this?

A. Collectively, employers and communities need to work together to help attract and retain talent, regardless of age, but especially younger generations and in rural areas. We need to champion the message that anyone can have a really great career and live a fantastic life at their own pace here. The NDCB program is an excellent tool to help make that happen.