



SERVING BUSINESS 2005

An Overview of Business Services at
Workforce Investment Boards

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Preface | 5 |
| Executive Summary | 6 |
| The Vision of a Demand-Driven Workforce System | 10 |
| Demand for Workforce Services | 10 |
| The Workforce Investment System | 10 |
| The Vision of a Demand-Driven System | 10 |
| Choices for Workforce Boards | 11 |
| Project Summary | 13 |
| The Menu of Business Services | 14 |
| Choosing Strategies | 19 |
| Getting the Facts | 19 |
| Strategic Options | 19 |
| Building Partnerships | 24 |
| Individual Employers | 24 |
| Industry Associations | 25 |
| Economic Development | 26 |
| Community Colleges | 26 |
| High Schools | 28 |
| Staffing Agencies | 29 |
| Meeting Challenges | 30 |
| Sustaining Leadership | 30 |
| Setting Priorities | 30 |
| Changing Program Culture | 30 |
| Internal Organization | 31 |
| Demonstrating Value | 32 |
| Finding the Right Measure | 32 |
| Developing Resources | 33 |
| Conclusions | 35 |
| Appendix—List of WIBS Consulted | 36 |



National Association of Workforce Boards

Where Business Helps America Work

This report summarizes information gathered by the National Association of Workforce Boards' (NAWB) Business Services and Outreach Initiative through discussions with Workforce Investment Board (WIB) representatives, focus groups, and written materials regarding workforce services available to businesses in Workforce Investment Areas across the United States.

NAWB conducted the project with funding from the US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration's High Growth Job Training Initiative. The views expressed in the report, however, do not necessarily reflect those of the US Department of Labor. The project had the assistance of DTI Associates, Inc.

The project investigated business services provided by Workforce Investment Boards and their related One-Stop Career Centers including:

- The *range* of workforce services available to businesses,
- Business service *strategies* employed,
- The types of *partnerships* and organizational arrangements used, and
- The *challenges* inherent in providing business services.

To address these issues, NAWB gathered information from local workforce boards from around the nation primarily through the use of telephone discussions and focus groups. A total of 48 senior Board and One-Stop Career Center representatives were consulted by telephone and representatives of 18 Boards attended focus groups in Washington, DC and San Diego.

This information was supplemented by a review of WIB web sites, written materials provided by the WIBs, research conducted for other projects, and written submissions of 45 WIBs that have existing business service and industry sector initiatives. The latter provided descriptions of initiatives undertaken as part of a related “incubator” sites program.

For the telephone discussions NAWB prepared a protocol composed of 26 mostly open-ended questions aimed at soliciting information about the “what” and “how” of business service delivery, allowing WIB representatives to provide the widest possible range of responses.

Those consulted included representatives of large and small WIB organizations from urban, rural, and suburban areas in all regions of the United States. The WIBs consulted include some boards just organizing business services and some that have provided innovative services to business for many years.

However, since the sponsors were seeking an in-depth understanding of how active business services programs provide services, it was not necessary to obtain a representative statistical sample and no attempt was made to do so. Those consulted on the telephone, for example, were self-selected - they responded to a general request from NAWB to provide information - or were recommended by their peers because of their reputation for providing business services.

Thus, the information gathered cannot be generalized to business services provided by all WIBs. Statistical descriptions of the responses (e.g. the percentage of the WIBs targeting small businesses) reflect only the practices of the WIBs contacted, not the practices of WIBs in general. A list of the WIBs consulted by NAWB for the project is provided as an Appendix at the end of this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“The realities of today's global economy make it imperative that the public workforce investment system be demand-driven, providing services that prepare workers to take advantage of new and increasing job opportunities in high growth/high demand and economically vital industries and sectors of the American economy. Becoming demand-driven represents a major transformation of this system, which, for 40 years, has been primarily labor-supply driven.”

Emily Stover DeRocco
Assistant Secretary of Labor
For Employment and Training (2004)

The Workforce Investment System across the United States is progressing toward comprehensive demand-driven business service strategies. Workforce Boards are creating partnerships with employers, educators, and the economic development community to address long-term needs and they are reorienting One-Stop Career Centers to better meet the day-to-day needs of individual employers, according to the findings of consultations with WIBs around the country.

This report is intended to help WIBs and policymakers better understand the diversity of services available, to understand how such programs are developed, and to outline some of the challenges in providing business services.

For the report, the National Association of Workforce Boards' Business Services and Outreach Initiative staff gathered information about demand-driven services provided to employers by WIBs and their related One-Stop Career Centers in several areas including:

- The *range and depth of workforce services* available to businesses,
- Business service *strategies* deployed by WIBs,
- The types of *partnerships* and organizational arrangements used, and

- The *challenges* of providing business services.

In the course of gathering this information, the project staff identified the concrete examples of available business services provided in the report

A MENU OF BUSINESS SERVICES

Local economic conditions and the needs of individual businesses vary widely in the 643 Workforce Investment Areas in the United States. To address these locally determined needs, WIBs have developed a wide range of business services activities. WIBs provide different levels of service depending upon the needs of business customers and WIB priorities. The most active WIBs combine and customize the services on their menu to provide unique solutions for each employer served.

The project found that business services provided by those WIBs consulted range over four broad areas:

- **Information Services.** Reliable information on local workforce and economic conditions can be extremely valuable to business. WIBs keep employers informed on local economic conditions, labor supply and demand, wages and benefit levels, human resource management issues, laws and regulations.

The *Chicago Workforce Board*, for instance, joined eight other local boards to form the Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago consortium to produce a “State of the Workforce Report” for metropolitan Chicago region. This statistical report is used to identify industry sectors to be targeted for business services.

- **Facilitation Services.** WIBs may act as facilitators for - or participants in - initiatives to foster economic development, reform general education, improve transportation for workers, and to address other broad workforce related issues. These services can best be provided by WIBs that have

established trust among a wide range of businesses and other organizations in the community. They require the direct and sustained involvement of the WIB leaders.

The Boston Private Industry Council (PIC) - Boston's Workforce Board was the major player in facilitating education reform in the city through the *Boston Compact*. The 20-year initiative developed at the request of Boston's business community to help improve the city's school system involves raising academic standards and integrating high school students into the workforce.

- **Standard Workforce Services.** Almost all WIBs offer an array of services to any business customer. These generally include employee recruitment, testing, screening, placement, pre-employment and on-the-job training, and services to firms undergoing layoffs and plant closings. These services may be customized to meet the needs of targeted industries or employers.

The *Central Texas Workforce Board* for example provides highly customized prescreening, interviewing, and employer-specific skill assessment rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach to providing services. More costly standard services, such as intensive skills training, however, are often restricted for lack of resources to serve everyone.

- **Special Workforce Services.** Some, but not all, WIBs provide special demand-driven workforce services including analysis of employee skill requirements, development and delivery of customized training, upgrading of incumbent workers' skills, drug testing, and training for supervisors and managers. WIB strategic priorities and available resources determine when and how these services are provided.

The *Salt Lake City WIB*, for example, offers their business customers a 12-hour supervisory training

course through Interpersonal Dynamics Inc. for a fee. Businesses designate supervisors and managers to attend the course to upgrade their people management skills, and *Workforce Essentials Inc.*, the Clarksville, Tennessee area WIB, has been helping employers with drug screening for more than 10 years.

The various types of service are often combined to meet the unique needs of local businesses. For instance, the *Susquehanna Workforce Network, Inc.* in Maryland staffs job fair booths, designs job ads, conducts training needs assessments, assists in developing training curricula, locates training providers, and helps prepare training grant applications for its local business customers.

STRATEGIES

Improving services to local businesses can take different forms. The WIB can provide systematic improvements in standard services to *all* businesses; it can create *new* business services, it can *target certain businesses* for more intensive or specialized services, or some combination of these. Information and Facilitation Services are, by their nature, generally available to all employers.

Since WIBs and One-Stop Career Centers have a large number of mandated services and limited resources, they often need to establish priorities and target services to selected business customers. While many standard services—especially recruitment and assessment—are available from all WIBs in some form, targeting allows more intensive or customized versions of standard services and the provision of specialized business services to priority employers.

To determine these priorities, WIBs employ a variety of strategies including:

- **Sectoral** strategies that target specific industries or clusters of high growth, and often high-wage, industry sectors in the local community. More

than 80 percent of the WIBs consulted said they use a sectoral approach to strategically target employers in their labor market areas. The *WorkPlace, Inc.* in Bridgeport, Connecticut targets the metal *manufacturing* sector because its workforce needed skill upgrading if it was to survive in national and international markets.

- **New and Expanding Business** strategies that target high growth businesses from any industry and are often conducted in conjunction with local economic development efforts. The *Tulare County WIB, Inc.* for example, provides training for employees and supervisors with existing businesses to help companies expand when new skills needed are not available in the community.
- **Small Business** strategies that target small and medium-sized employers and often provide services useful to small businesses but not sought by larger employers. Seventy-five percent of the WIBs target services to small to medium-sized businesses. For example, *Northern Rural Training & Employment Consortium* in California chose a small business strategy because ninety percent of the businesses in its nine-county rural workforce area have fewer than twenty employees.
- **Key Customer** strategies that target businesses that have, or are likely to have, the greatest demand for services—often major local employers. The *Work Source—Greater Austin Area Workforce Board*, for example, serves, to a large degree, as the human resource arm for a local university; the WIB advertises, recruits, screens, and interviews for all positions except professors.
- **Fee-for Service** strategies that seek to expand available services by charging a fee for certain more intensive or specialized services. About a quarter (27 percent) of the WIBs said they also charged for at least some specialized services. A number of WIBs in Wisconsin, including the *Bay*

Area Workforce Development Board in Wisconsin and the, are promoting a sophisticated computer-based assessment tool on a fee-for-service basis.

These strategies are not mutually exclusive, and WIBs often develop overall service priorities that combine the strategies. For example, a Board may decide to provide more intensive services to small high-growth technology firms and charge a fee for some of these services. The industries targeted are usually high-growth or rapidly changing industries such as health care, telecommunications, and high-tech manufacturing. These may be industries that currently have a major share of local employment or industries that the Board would like to attract.

PARTNERSHIPS

In developing an overall strategy, the WIB must ensure that all programs and resources within its authority are aligned to meet the goals implied in that strategy. However, these resources are often too limited to meet the need. Thus, to leverage available resources, WIBs with active business services programs form partnerships with other organizations in their communities. These are substantive partnerships in which both sides benefit as a result of the relationship. This report describes partnerships with the following types of organizations:

- **Single employers.** The *Greater Peninsula Workforce Investment Board* in southeast Virginia and *Northrop Grumman Newport News* joined to form the Manufacturing Pipeline Project to recruit potential employees, assess them for competencies needed by the Northrop Grumman shipyard and arrange for the needed training.
- **Associations of employers.** The *Atlantic/Cape May County WIB* in New Jersey has joined with the National Retail Federation and a group of local retail employers to set up a retail educational center.
- **Economic development organizations.** The *East Baton Rouge Parish WIB* in Louisiana part-

ners with the State Department of Economic Development to jointly administer an entrepreneurial program that helps small businesses obtain services.

- **Community colleges.** *South Central Michigan Works!* has developed a partnership for customized and incumbent worker training in conjunction with community colleges and economic development training agencies.
- **High Schools.** The *North Central Wisconsin WIB* partnered with area schools and employers to develop the Employability Worker Certificate for students and job seekers, which is recognized by both schools and employers.
- **Staffing agencies.** The *Trident WIB* in South Carolina has started a program with staffing agencies for the Low Country Manufacturing Council, a partnership among the local chamber of commerce, staffing firms, manufacturers, and the public workforce system.

Each type of partnership offers value depending on the kinds of businesses being targeted and the services needed. Some types of partnerships are quite widespread among the WIBs consulted. For example, nearly three quarters (73 percent) of the WIBs said that they have what they consider strong partnerships with local chambers of commerce. Similarly, WIBs said that they engage in a variety of partnerships in order to serve the diverse needs of their communities.

CHALLENGES

The major challenges to implementing a demand-driven system of business services identified in conversation with WIBs are:

- Sustaining leadership,
- Setting priorities,
- Organizing to focus on business customers,

- Changing program culture to embrace business services,
- Demonstrating value to skeptical employers,
- Establishing measures of progress and incentives, and
- Developing resources.

These challenges can be addressed in many ways. In organizing business services, for example, seventy percent of the WIBs rely on their One-Stop Career Center staff to provide business services. But they often supplement or enhance the business service functions of the One Stop Centers.

About half of WIBs (48 percent) have organized separate Business Service Centers staffed by specially trained professionals or jointly staff them with partners from community colleges, chambers of commerce or economic development organizations. And 10 of the 48 WIBs (roughly 20 percent) contract with other organizations (e.g. the Chamber of Commerce) to provide business services. Several WIBs consulted have dedicated industry experts to serve the special interests of targeted industries such as health care or high tech manufacturing.

Finding funding and leveraging resources already in the system proved to be another major challenge. More than half—55 percent—of the WIBs contacted raise at least some additional funds from outside sources to support business services. Although fee-for-service approaches are used by a quarter of the WIBs consulted, none indicated that fee-for-service activities were a major source of revenue.

Many WIBs said they are able to provide business services despite limited staff and funding resources. Over half of the WIBs consulted, in fact, are in non-metropolitan areas operating with small staffs and limited resources. To provide added business services they focus resources and efficiently integrate business services into their delivery infrastructure.

THE VISION OF A DEMAND-DRIVEN WORKFORCE SYSTEM

This report describes demand-driven business services¹ currently provided by Workforce Investment Boards and their affiliated One-Stop Career Centers in the United States. The overall national strategy for the public workforce investment system, as articulated by Assistant Secretary Emily Stover-DeRocco, is that the entire system should be “demand-driven.” This vision holds that the system should be driven by the demands of the individual employers, specific industries, and local economy in general rather than driven by the labor supply—jobseekers, students, and workers.

The demand-driven model requires WIBs and One-Stop Centers to spend more time and other resources in working directly with employers, in developing strategies to make the best use of limited resources to serve businesses, and in developing staff capacity to meet the human resource requirements of local employers. In this vision the Workforce Investment System becomes a critical broker linking businesses, economic development, and the educational community in an effort to deliver innovative solutions to the workforce challenges of today and tomorrow.

THE DEMAND FOR WORKFORCE SERVICES

In the ideal world of economic theory, supply always matches demand and everyone has perfect knowledge of both. In such a world there would be no need for workforce services. But it is an imperfect world. Jobseekers often don't know where to find available jobs, what skills those jobs require, or how to prepare for jobs in demand.

For their part, employers often have difficulty connecting to students and jobseekers; they often require assistance in recruiting, selecting, training, and retraining workers; and they need information on wages, eco-

nomical conditions, laws and other information needed for the smooth functioning of the labor market.

To address these concerns employers need an efficient system to help find the best employees for the jobs available, or, if qualified candidates are not currently available, to provide education and training for students, jobseekers and incumbent workers to enable them to meet employers' needs. Employers need sophisticated information on human resource related matters, and they need someone to facilitate the development of the demanded services and information.

Private vendors meet some of these needs through newspaper want ads, Internet job boards, temporary help services, skills training, human resources consulting, and the like. However, experience has shown that the public sector, including WIBs, can serve a vital role helping the labor market function smoothly.

THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT SYSTEM


There are 643 Workforce Investment Areas—states, cities, counties, or combinations of these²—each operating under the policy direction of a WIB. The federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 established WIBs to guide the development and provision of workforce services for employers, employees, and job seekers in all Workforce Investment Areas. The law requires that the chair and a majority of WIB members be representatives of the private sector to help ensure that the workforce development needs of employers be addressed.

THE VISION OF A DEMAND-DRIVEN WORKFORCE SYSTEM

Future Oriented. A demand-driven Workforce-Investment system can be judged by the way it behaves. Such a system would be future oriented:

¹ Business services, for purposes of this report, are workforce related services – employee recruitment, assessment, training, provision of information on local workforce and economic conditions, etc. – directed to employers and their human resources staff in local Workforce Investment Areas around the United States. The words “business” and “employers” are used interchangeably in this report although it is recognized that many small businesses – individual professionals, small family operations, etc. – do not have employees and that some employers such as nonprofit hospitals are not technically businesses.

² The entire state is a single workforce investment area in five small population states - New Hampshire, Vermont, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming. The District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands are also workforce investment areas



while it would serve the workforce needs of businesses in traditional industries, the system would also prepare workers for emerging industries and continuously assess and respond to the demands of rapidly emerging industries and high growth occupations. Such a system would serve as a catalyst for local community growth linking economic development with businesses and educators to meet the current and future demands of businesses.

Informed. The system would build on a foundation of economic research and planning so that all partners could understand and respond to the needs of employers in their local labor market. The research would provide information necessary to support the growth and recruitment of businesses in high growth industries and to identify the skills workers need for new jobs being created.

Integrated. The demand-driven system envisioned would use the full array of One-Stop Career Center resources across all programs to offer customized solutions to business. It would integrate multiple public funding streams into a cohesive service strategy. In the process of integrating programs, it would reach out to the underutilized talents of dislocated workers, individuals with disabilities, older workers and youth.

Created Through Partnerships. The new demand-driven system would form partnerships with economic development, businesses, and education. The system must be entrepreneurial so as to leverage a wide array of resources beyond the immediate control of the workforce investment system. This new model is one in which economic development, education, individual businesses, and the workforce investment system collaborate rather than compete for business. In a demand-driven system, each partner leverages the others' strengths to create an integrated human capital solution for employers.

Supported by Strategic Pillars. There are three key interrelated strategic pillars that comprise a demand-driven public workforce system: strategic planning leading to strategic investments, program and service integration leading to human capital solutions, and human capital solutions leading to increased worker opportunities. Strategic planning includes economic analysis, demand-driven workforce strategies, strategic partnerships, system alignment and resource leveraging.

Program integration includes using all One-Stop career center assets to support solutions, providing a full array of services for all populations, state and local leadership, and funding and infrastructure integration. Human capital solutions includes a solutions-based approach to serving business, demand-driven career guidance, individual service delivery, and the development of skilled public workforce system staff.

Overall, a demand-driven workforce system would take its lead from the businesses it serves. It would listen to the needs of businesses as they define them. It would seek educational partners to help define the skills required and to train the workers to meet those needs.

CHOICES FOR WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARDS

WIBs can to some extent choose to be “supply-driven” or “demand-driven.” They can choose to spend most of their time and resources responding to the desires of those who make up the labor supply (job-seekers, workers, and students). Or, they can elect to shift some resources to address the needs of those who determine labor demand—the employers. But it is a matter of emphasis. In practice both customers—employers and job seekers—need to be served to meet the needs of either adequately.

Historically, the workforce development system has tended to be more “supply-driven” than “demand-driven” for both practical and legislative reasons. Typically, jobseekers are more likely to seek out the

assistance of One-Stop Centers—if only to review job postings—than are employers. One-Stop staff members are more likely have the skills needed to work with individual jobseekers than with employers. And job developers, hired to solicit job orders from employers, often lack the authority or resources to develop a broad range of sophisticated services required by business.

Complexity and Systemic Solutions

The WIBs' job is made all the more difficult by the fact that employers often encounter complex workforce problems that require systemic solutions. Addressing the problems requires the resources of a variety of organizations— public and private.

The national shortage of health care workers, for example, results from a host of factors including lack of available training facilities, a shortage of qualified instructors, low reimbursement rates for teaching hospitals, below market wages, unappealing working conditions, and lack of accessible career information to attract students to select health careers. These problems are further exacerbated by such exogenous factors as global competition, skill deficiencies in many regions and populations, and the aging of the workforce.

Any effective solution will require a systemic approach involving the participation not only of employers but also of high schools, industry associations, colleges, workforce programs, and health care regulators among others. The Workforce Board can play a key role in addressing these systemic problems by serving as a convener of the public agencies, employers and others.

Legislatively, workforce programs have been traditionally charged by law to ensure those with the least advantages in the labor market—the poor, unemployed, poorly educated, and those with little work experience—receive services that allow them to participate in the mainstream economy and to protect jobseekers from discrimination by employers on the basis of race, ethnicity, sex, and disability. Similarly, the legislated measures of program success—placement rates, wages, etc.—apply almost exclusively to jobseekers.

While these legislative and historical conditions do not prevent WIBs and their affiliated One-Stop Career centers from being demand-driven, they have tended to focus resources toward the supply side of the labor market.

Over the years, however, it has become apparent that the needs of students and jobseekers can be better addressed if workforce programs are aligned with the specific requirements of employers. In recent years it has been argued that the best way to serve the needs of both jobseekers and employers is to improve services to businesses directly, the “demand-driven” model.

Workforce Board members and staff consulted for this report acknowledged the need to become more demand driven. All of the WIBs contacted for this report, for instance, said their programs are, or should be, demand-driven. It has also long been known that some WIBs have well-established business oriented policies and programs but these have not been widely emulated in the workforce development system.

This report is intended to help WIBs and policymakers better understand the diversity of demand-driven business services available, to understand how such programs are developed, to outline some of the challenges in providing business services, and to provide examples of effective services for other WIBs to enhance their own business service development efforts.

PROJECT SUMMARY



SERVING BUSINESS

An Overview of Business Services at
Workforce Investment Boards

THE MENU OF BUSINESS SERVICES

All workforce development activities are, in some sense, services to businesses. Given the nature of the labor market, every time a job seeker is helped to find a job, an employer is helped to find an employee. The real added value of the workforce development system for employers, however, is the efficiency with which the system can both respond to and anticipate their individual needs, which vary widely from place to place and time to time.

The project found that the business services offered by the WIBs consulted cover a wide range of activities, vary in intensity, and are provided by a variety of organizations. The type and extent of business services depends on WIB priorities, local politics, the expressed needs of local businesses, and, to some extent, the ability of the WIB to generate additional funding for special services. WIBs tend to specialize in services that are most in demand by their preferred business customers.

THE RANGE OF SERVICES

The business services described by the WIBs ranged over four broad areas.

- Information Services
- Facilitation Services
- Standard Workforce Services
- Specialized Workforce Services

Table I shows business services provided by the 48 WIBs consulted by telephone for the project.³ More than 40 of the 48 WIB representatives consulted said they provide transition services for dislocated workers, recruitment, job matching, and brokering educational services for business customers, as well as information and facilitation services.

Various types of recruiting services are among those most in demand. Sometimes this takes the form of handling all recruitment functions for a given employer; at other times it may mean providing space at the One-Stop Center for the business to assess, interview, and select applicants on their own.

Some Boards go well beyond the standard menu of services. One-third of all WIBs contacted said that they conduct customized background checks of job applicants or arrange for pre-employment drug testing. Roughly half of the WIBs said they offer post-employment case management for incumbent workers as a means of reducing turnover for specific employers. A majority said they provide customized human resources services (beyond recruitment, screening, training and placement).

The following definitions describe a variety of specific services available to employers through WIBs and One-Stop Career Centers:

INFORMATION SERVICES

Workforce Boards help keep employers informed on local economic conditions, labor supply and demand, wages and benefits, human resource management issues, and labor laws and regulations. These are often provided in meetings and seminars in addition to standard published and web-based distribution. Such information may be general—about the entire local economy or workforce—or specialized.

Information services are often geared to small businesses, prospective employers looking to locate or expand in the community, specialized employers, or employers in targeted sectors or industries. Workforce programs may sponsor monthly breakfasts or lunches for targeted employers so that they can share information and concerns among themselves and with the workforce staff as well as receive information from speakers. WIBs sponsor annual economic

³ This table derives from a list of potential services developed by NAWB and others to gauge the variety of business services available and submitted to the WIBs consulted.

Table I

Business Services Provided Ranked by Positive Responses (Total 48 WIBs)

| | Yes | No | NA* |
|---|-----|----|-----|
| 1. Transition services for dislocated workers | 44 | 1 | 3 |
| 2. Job development/business relations | 43 | 0 | 5 |
| 3. Recruitment and custom assessment services | 43 | 1 | 4 |
| 4. Placement services and follow-up services after placement | 43 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. Screening and job matching | 41 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. Convening partners to develop strategic plans that address the community's workforce issues | 41 | 0 | 7 |
| 7. Targeted recruitment | 40 | 4 | 4 |
| 8. Connections to training for individuals and employers | 40 | 1 | 7 |
| 9. Sectoral or industry and/or "high growth" industry based initiatives to engage employers | 39 | 7 | 2 |
| 10. Customized and incumbent worker training (subsidized or unsubsidized) | 39 | 6 | 3 |
| 11. Provide labor market and economic information | 38 | 5 | 5 |
| 12. Services focused on small business | 37 | 7 | 4 |
| 13. Occupational skills training (new hires) | 36 | 7 | 5 |
| 14. Human resource services for business | 35 | 10 | 3 |
| 15. Subsidized On-the-Job-Training | 34 | 10 | 4 |
| 16. Engaging the K-16 educational system in dialogue and development of systemic solutions responsive to business | 33 | 11 | 4 |
| 17. Incumbent workers ESL/Remedial Education | 26 | 15 | 7 |
| 18. Incumbent worker case management | 21 | 20 | 7 |
| 19. Employer jobs hotline | 18 | 25 | 5 |
| 20. Background checks and drug screening | 12 | 33 | 3 |

* No answer recorded

forums to help employers better understand the local economy and workforce trends.

FACILITATION SERVICES

Among the most valuable services WIBs can offer the general business community is to act as a facilitator or broker among organizations to achieve a common goal. Workforce Boards act as facilitators for initiatives to foster economic development, develop industry-wide strategies, improve the local workforce, reform general education, and even to improve transportation for workers. They can create and maintain long-term partnerships, which may or may not be headed by the WIB. Facilitation services can best be provided by WIBs that have established trust among a wide range of businesses and other organizations in the community. They require the direct and sustained involvement of the WIB leaders.

STANDARD WORKFORCE SERVICES

WIBs regularly provide services that are generally available to all business customers but may be customized to meet the need of targeted industries or employers. The quality and intensity of these services may vary widely from WIB to WIB and depend to some extent on the priorities and resources of the individual WIB. Some more costly services such as occupational training may be reserved for targeted employers. Such services are limited by the lack of available funding and competing priorities. Among the standard services available to businesses are:

Basic Labor Exchange Services. Recruitment, screening, general assessment, and referral to the employer are the most traditional and universally available to business. One-Stop Centers list job openings for businesses at all offices and on the Internet. Appropriate applicants are screened, assessed and then referred to the employer. Labor exchange services are often customized or expanded for particular employers.

Targeted Recruitment. Where basic labor exchange services do not generate enough qualified applicants,

the workforce programs can actively recruit applicants for businesses. This may include placing advertisements in local newspapers, searching the Web, and seeking applicants with specialized skills from out of the area. Targeted recruitment is often offered to employers who need workers with very specific skill sets or to employers new to the local area. In the case of employers opening new facilities in the community, the workforce program can take on the role of a personnel department and can handle all the steps in the hiring process that precede the final selection.

Screening. A major cost of hiring is the screening for qualified applicants. Workforce programs can offer a service whereby applications are reviewed and initial interviews conducted using employer screening criteria. The employer retains the hiring decision. This service can be particularly useful to smaller employers without their own human resources staff or employers hiring large numbers of workers at one time.

Assessment. Some jobs require verification and documentation of academic or technical skills beyond that possible through informal screening, face-to-face interviews, or review of resumes. Assessment services usually involve administering a variety of formal, standard tests of basic academic skills (math, reading, writing), English proficiency, specific occupational skills, or the so-called “soft skills” related to teamwork, decision-making, customer service, and the like. The workforce program works with the employer to determine which assessment would be most appropriate and then administers the assessment for the employer.

Follow-up. Workforce program staff stays in contact with new employees and help to resolve issues of either employers or employees after workers have been placed on the job. Most employee turnover occurs in the first 90 days of employment and such follow-up can significantly reduce turnover.

Identification of Training. Workforce programs can act as training brokers for employers by assessing

the employer's training needs and identifying appropriate providers (individual trainers, community colleges, technical schools, private vendors, etc.). Workforce program staff may also work with training providers to customize existing training programs or develop new training curricula for an employer or groups of employers.

Individual Training Accounts. The Workforce Investment Act allows programs to offer participants Individual Training Accounts or “vouchers” to be used to support the cost of skills training of the participants' choice provided by approved vendors (community colleges, technical schools, etc.). WIBs and One-Stop Centers are charged with working with businesses and vendors to ensure that the vendors are providing up-to-date and relevant courses and that participants are made aware of local high demand occupations that require skills training.

Subsidized On-the-Job-Training. Workforce programs can subsidize the extraordinary costs of informal on-the-job training of new employees provided by the employer (as opposed to formal classroom instruction) for up to half the cost of the employee's wage for up to six months. Employers agree to hire the trainee as a regular employee while in training and to retain the individual at the end of the training period.

English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) and Remedial Education. Workforce programs help employers arrange ESL/remedial education (often on-site) to help incumbent workers basic education and ESL training.

Outplacement Services. Workforce programs work with employers undergoing layoffs to assist laid off workers in finding new employment. The programs often work closely with the employers to identify the experience and skills of the workers to be laid off. They may conduct in-depth assessments before the employees are actually laid off and make arrangements for training or placement in new jobs. Program

staff can provide the services at the work site.

Incumbent Worker Services. Workforce programs help employers locate, design, deliver, and pay for the training or any combination of these activities to upgrade skills and avoid layoffs resulting from new equipment or work processes that create demand for new or more specialized skills among the existing workforce. They may also provide skill assessment of incumbent workers, gap analysis of existing skills versus needed skills, and train supervisors.

SPECIALIZED WORKFORCE SERVICES

In addition to standard services, specialized workforce services are available from some, but not all WIBs. The determination of whether these services will be provided and, if so, which employers will receive them is largely a matter of local WIB policies. They may be provided on a first-come first-served basis or provided as part of an overall strategic plan for targeting certain types of business. (See “Choosing Strategies” section of this report.) Some are provided only on a fee-for service basis.

Customized Skills Training. Individual employers or groups of employers may have special skill needs which cannot be filled from the existing pool of workers because of changing technology, new processes, or relocation of new industries to the local community. To meet these demands, workforce programs arrange for job skills analysis, curriculum development, and delivery of new training to meet the specific needs of the employers. Customized Training may be provided on a re-employment basis or as incumbent worker training.

Supervisory and Management Training. Workforce Boards sponsor or facilitate special training to improve supervisory skills, to help small business better understand quality management (e.g. ISO 9000), and to better manage their human resources in general.

Small Business Services. WIBs often tailor services to meet the specific needs of small employers. These services range from assisting employers to write job descriptions to making space available in the One-Stop Center for employers to conduct interviews. The services may be provided through local One-Stop Career Centers or through stand-alone small business service centers.

Background Checks and Drug Screening.

Increasingly, employers need proof that new employees are drug-free or do not have any criminal records that might disqualify them from certain types of work. Workforce programs can arrange for either or both of these services for selected employers or on a fee-for-service basis.



A Business Services Sampler

The *Susquehanna Workforce Network, Inc.* in Maryland staffs job fair booths, designs job ads, conducts training needs assessments, assists in developing training curricula, locates training providers, and helps prepare training grant applications for its local business customers.

The *Texas Work Source - Greater Austin Area Workforce Board* and its affiliated system serve, to a large degree, as the human resource arm for a local university. It advertises, recruits, screens, and interviews for all positions except professors.

The *Metro Southwest Regional Employment Board* of Massachusetts has chosen to focus on educating entry-level incumbent workers, since employers expressed concern about the literacy skills of their workers and no other organization was offering the service.

The *Salt Lake City WIB* in Utah offers their business customers a 12-hour supervisory training course through Interpersonal Dynamics Inc. for a fee. Businesses designate supervisors and managers to attend the course to upgrade their people management skills.

Workforce Essentials Inc., the Clarksville, Tennessee area WIB, has been helping employers with drug screening and background checks on a fee for service basis for more than 10 years.

The *San Diego Workforce Board* sponsors an annual employer conference to highlight local economic and workforce conditions turning the information itself into a valued service for their local employers.



CHOOSING STRATEGIES

Given limited resources, WIBs that wish to improve their services to employers must balance serving their business customers on a first-come, first-served basis as well as establishing priorities among competing demands. As one source said: “Too often WIBs try to be all things to everyone and end up being nothing to anyone. To succeed, WIBs must establish priorities.” To do this, WIBs develop strategies that target certain types of employers or emphasize certain specialized business services. These priorities are driven by the WIB’s overall strategy for serving business.

GETTING THE FACTS

The WIB representatives consulted agreed that to develop appropriate priorities and strategies, the WIB must first understand the local economy in detail. To do this WIBs work closely with the state Labor Market Information units, banks, public utilities, universities and other organizations that regularly gather and analyze detailed information about the local economy and workforce. In addition, WIBs consult employers, employer associations, unions, community

colleges, and others who have a day-to-day feel for what is happening in the local economy.

The information developed serves as a guide in anticipating future needs not only for local workforce development agencies but also for economic development organizations, educational institutions, training providers, and employers themselves.

STRATEGIC OPTIONS

Armed with sound information on the local economy and workforce, the Boards can develop priorities for business services and develop strategies for delivering them. The criteria used for targeting firms include such indicators as:

- Significant current and projected job creation,
- High volumes of job orders,
- A large number of high-wage, high-demand jobs available, and

WIBs Getting the Facts

The *Bay Area Workforce Development Board* in Green Bay Wisconsin joined with a neighboring WIB to commission an in-depth Economic Opportunity Study of Northern Wisconsin. The study is designed to help them focus on regional initiatives and make more effective connections with the critical industries in the region. The economic assessment will provide measures of the overall economic health of the region (median wage, industry growth patterns, etc.) and guide WIB priorities.

The *San Diego Workforce Board* conducts year-round research and sponsors annual employer conferences to highlight local economic and workforce conditions, turning the information itself into a valued service for their local employers because it allows the companies to better understand the local business environment.

The *Chicago Workforce Board* joined eight other local boards to form the Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago consortium. The consortium and metropolitan economic development agencies produce a "State of the Workforce Report" for metropolitan Chicago. This statistical report is used to identify industry sectors to be targeted for business services. The consortium convenes Industry Summits, which provide a forum for business, education, business associations, chambers of commerce and community organizations to identify workforce issues and solutions.

- Regular users of the local workforce development system.

To determine how to best allocate scarce resources, active WIBs develop general strategies to target business services to certain priority customers. The strategies chosen depend on local Board priorities, economic conditions, and resources available. The strategies are not mutually exclusive, but they are consciously chosen and establish clear priorities for the allocation of time and money.

Industry Sectors. Sectoral strategies have gained popularity with both workforce and economic development practitioners in recent years. This approach targets industry “sectors” for priority. These may be traditionally defined industries or “clusters” of related industries.

More than 80 percent of the WIBs consulted said they use a sectoral approach to strategically target employers in their labor market areas. The industries targeted are usually high-growth or rapidly changing industries such as health care, telecommunications, and high-tech manufacturing. These may be industries that currently have a major share of local employment or industries that the Board would like to attract.

New or Expanding Business. Some WIBs have determined that they will not select specific industries or sectors to be targeted but will give priority to any new or expanding employers in the community. Such a strategy is often coordinated with local economic development organizations so that workforce development services become a part of the community's overall development strategy.

Sector Strategies Around the Nation

The *WorkPlace, Inc.* in Bridgeport, Connecticut targeted metal manufacturing because its workforce needed skill upgrading if it was to survive in national and international markets. Strategy meetings of the eleven manufacturers led to a seed grant from the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development. The grant helped to develop a system to upgrade the skills of metal manufacturing workers. The *WorkPlace, Inc.* then organized METAL, an incorporated industry membership organization, of which the WIB remains a part. The WIB and its business partners recently won a competitive grant from the US Department of Labor to provide incumbent worker training in “lean manufacturing” techniques.

Workforce Essentials, Inc., of Clarksville, Tennessee is one of many WIBs that target healthcare. To implement their strategy, this WIB joined with the Tennessee Hospital Association and the Hospital Corporation of America (HCA) to obtain an H-1B Technical Skills Training Grant (H-1B is a section of immigration law that provides funds for training American workers). Those funds were combined with employer incentives to recruit, train, and employ over 300 nurses, as well as to back-fill many entry-level health care positions. The WIB also trains Certified Nursing Aides at its One-Stop centers and sponsors Licensed Practical Nursing classes through the local education system.

The *Atlantic/Cape May County WIB* targets the hospitality industry especially those related to the large casino industry in Atlantic City. The WIB has helped open a training center in each of three casinos. organizations to identify workforce issues and solutions.

Key Customer. This strategy targets businesses that have, or are likely to have, the greatest demand for workforce services such as major local employers with high turnover. Such a strategy may seek to ensure the retention and expansion of existing businesses through the retraining of incumbent workers. The strategy is employed to allow businesses to expand rather than go out of business or be forced to move for lack of qualified workers.

Tulare County Saves a Key Customer

In rural Tulare County, California, an existing employer wanted to begin manufacturing a new product that required higher skilled employees than they had on staff or were available locally. So the *Tulare County WIB, Inc.* sent a trainer to San Diego to learn how to train the incumbent employees to be able to perform the new tasks. The WIB also trained supervisors in how they could support newly trained workers. The results were that there were no layoffs and incumbent employees who shifted to new positions got raises.

Small Business. Seventy-five percent of the WIBs have targeted services to small to medium-sized businesses. Small business needs differ significantly from those of large businesses. Such firms, taken together, often make up a majority of both existing and new jobs in a community. Yet they often do not have the resources necessary to effectively recruit, hire, and train the workers they need.

Small Business Initiatives

The *Brevard Workforce Development Board, Inc.*, in Florida has “employer learning events” that focus on the needs of small businesses. The WIB provides small employers with training on such topics as wage standards, employment application development, and job descriptions. The board gives funding priority for customized training to firms with 25 employees or fewer.

Northern Rural Training & Employment Consortium in California chose a small business strategy because ninety percent of the businesses in its nine-county rural workforce area have fewer than twenty employees. To serve its business customers the WIB has, in effect, become the human resources department for many of these businesses.

WIB Business Service Representatives—who are all Certified Staffing Specialists—act as consultants to their customers assisting them in developing job descriptions, designing interview protocols, using software packages to write employee handbooks, and designing compensation packages in addition to providing more standard recruitment and assessment services. The Representatives do not advise business on legal issues but do refer legal questions to a law firm that specializes in employment law.

Fee-for-Service. About a quarter (27 percent) of the Boards offer special services on a fee-for-service basis. These WIBs have made strategic decisions to charge for certain customized services. Generally these services are on the targeted end of the service continuum and tend to be more time and labor intensive.

Of the WIBs actively using fee-for-service strategies, most (nine of the 13) chose to charge for customized services that could not be provided otherwise. Examples of fee-for-service activities include:

- Assessing company human resource practices,
- Helping employers write employee manuals,
- Arranging for pre-employment drug screening, and
- Writing job descriptions.

The fees to businesses cover operating costs to the public workforce system rather than generating revenues to be used for other services. In the specific



JobFit: A Case Study of Fee for Service



A number of WIBs in Wisconsin, including the *Bay Area Workforce Development Board* in Wisconsin and the *Northwest Wisconsin Concentrated Employment Program (CEP)*, are promoting a sophisticated computer-based assessment tool called JobFit Talent Profiling System for soft-skills job matching, which is being marketed to businesses for a fee. Characteristics of this system are:



- The JobFit system draws on the expertise of a Subject Matter Expert (SME) - usually an experienced worker - as well as a direct supervisor for each job posted by a company. The SMEs and supervisors complete the same assessments as prospective employees. The results of SME and direct supervisor assessments are used to form a "job pattern."
- Software then allows employers to match their job patterns to candidate assessments and/or resumes.
- All job seekers who complete an assessment have a "Career Compatibility" report produced, comparing their soft skills to analyzed jobs in the US Department of Labor O*NET national database of occupations.
- Employers are given a "Placement Report" that creates interview questions based on assessed gaps between the applicant and the SME.
- Upon hiring an individual, the employer may download a "Coaching Report" with mentoring tips and turnover reduction strategies specific to each individual situation.



The employer may also determine the degree of match of skills among jobs within the company through a "Multi Job Match Report." The employer can use this report for lateral transfer, succession planning, and establishing career ladders.



case of Texas, the state distributes a list of business services that WIBs and One-Stop Centers cannot charge. These are typically the standard services available to any business.

Tiers of Service About a third of surveyed WIBs consciously designate “tiers” of business services; i.e. they delineate which services will be provided to which businesses. Some WIBs—*Brevard County Florida, Trident WIB in South Carolina, Southeastern Wisconsin, and the Atlantic-Cape May County WIB in New Jersey*—label the tiers with such designations as “silver,” “gold,” and “platinum;” or “core,” “key,” and “premiere.” Whatever they are called the categories

indicate progressively more intensive services given to specific businesses based on WIB-determined priorities of service.

The WIBs consulted, however, used widely differing criteria for establishing the tiers and admitted that given changing economic conditions and business needs, they did not rigorously adhere to the designations. More commonly, WIBs consulted said that they customized business services to individual employers. The *Central Texas Workforce Board* for example provides highly customized prescreening, interviewing, and employer-specific skill assessment rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach to providing services.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Implementing their chosen strategies often requires that WIBs partner with other organizations in the community. Depending upon the situation, WIBs partner directly with employers or with other organizations essential to making a given strategy work. The types of partnerships described by the WIBs ranged widely. Some are described below.

INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYERS

In cases where large employers make up a significant

segment of the local workforce, WIBs often establish long-term partnerships to ensure that their needs are promptly and effectively met.

Such partnerships are mutually reinforcing for the WIB and the employer. They give the employer a reliable source of new employees, training for existing employees, and other services. For the WIBS, individual employer partnerships help them to reliably meet their performance standards and meet community needs.

Individual Employer Partnership

The *Greater Peninsula Workforce Investment Board* in southeast Virginia and *Northrop Grumman Newport News* joined to form the Manufacturing Pipeline Project. A consortium of Thomas Nelson Community College, the Virginia Employment Commission, and the Peninsula Career Development Center administers the project, which recruits potential employees, including dislocated workers, and assesses them for competencies needed by the Northrop Grumman shipyard.

The project began with a skills analysis of the company's critical jobs and a Work Keys Assessment to screen potential applicants was developed and administered to 1,006 applicants who passed the assessment process. Of those, 496 were interviewed and 274 were hired. More than a dozen manufacturing companies in the region now use the Pipeline project.

Around the country, the demand for health care workers remains high, and in smaller communities hospitals are often the major employer. Hospitals are often a top choice for WIB business partnerships. Examples include:

- The *Trident WIB* in South Carolina was approached by Private Health Systems to set up a nursing training program. The result has been a "little hospital" type training program actually set up in the One-Stop Center.
- The *Gulf Coast Workforce Board* in Texas has provided comprehensive set of services to increase the number of nursing faculty and graduates. Career counselors in hospitals help workers progress to other high demand positions such as nursing.
- The *Lincoln Trail Area Development District* in Kentucky is working with a local hospital to open up a career center within the hospital itself. Part-time staff will work with hospital employees that want to reach higher-level occupations at the hospitals.

INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS

WIBs that chose sectoral strategies often forge relationships with industry trade associations. The associations may be formal incorporated trade associations or groups organized to address specific workforce development needs. Partnerships with such groups

allow the WIB to increase its reach, to gain credibility within the industry, and to develop a better understanding of the hiring and training needs of the industry. Some chose to work with national trade associations while others chose to help local companies develop organizations to address specialized needs.

Working with Industry Associations

The *Employers Workforce Development Network (EWDN)* in the Green Bay, Wisconsin area consists of 50 employers. EWDN is a publicly funded project that supports training on cutting edge technology, supervisory skills, and English as Second Language (ESL) as well the sharing of best practices.

The *Atlantic/Cape May County WIB* in New Jersey has joined with the National Retail Federation and a group of local retail employers to set up a retail educational center modeled after similar efforts elsewhere. The involved parties are sharing the expense with some outside funding. The WIB is paying for the equipment and staffing the center. The Hamilton Mall in Mays Landing, New Jersey will donate the space for the 5,000 square foot training center.

The *Workforce Investment Board of Herkimer, Madison, and Oneida Counties, Inc.*, in Utica, NY, has been engaged in a new Cyber Security training effort, involving an association of 20 information technology related employers and area colleges. Many of the firms involved are small employers.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WIBs work with local chambers of commerce and other economic development organizations to extend the reach of their services to businesses. This is particularly relevant when the WIB undertakes sectoral or new and expanding business strategies. The local chamber of commerce can both help the workforce board determine priority industry clusters and provide employer referrals to the WIB.

Nearly three quarters (73 percent) of the WIBs said that they have what they consider strong partnerships with local chambers of commerce. These partnerships allow WIBs to gain access to local businesses that would not be available otherwise. WIBs and chambers of commerce sometimes have mutual referral systems. If one entity cannot provide a desired business service, it refers the business to the other.

Active WIBs also reported good working relations with local and state economic development agencies. Where the partnership works well, the economic development agency brings the WIB in early on to help address prospective employer workforce concerns. Local chambers of commerce and economic development agencies are often represented on the workforce board as well. This helps further integrate the various organizations' workforce efforts.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

The nation's 1300 community colleges provide the basic infrastructure for career education and training in many communities. Community colleges are at times the only institutions in the community that can provide occupational training or quickly adjust to meet the changing education and training needs of employers⁴. Community Colleges often employ the

Economical Development Partners

The *East Baton Rouge Parish WIB* in Louisiana partners with the State Department of Economic Development to administer an entrepreneurial program to help small businesses obtain services (management consulting; accounting; marketing; information technology; etc.). Businesses are free to select any provider on the State's approved consultant list. At least 10 percent of the cost of the service is paid by the business with the program paying the remainder. The program was so successful in its first year, according to the director, that the State increased funding.

The *Racine County Workforce Development Center* in Wisconsin has arranged for staff from the chamber of commerce and the local Economic Development Corporation to serve as part of the business consulting staff in the One-Stop Career Center, thus providing a level of expertise not otherwise available.

The *Pacific Mountain WIB* in the State of Washington partners with the Grays Harbor Chamber of Commerce which manages an Integrated Business Service Plan. The Business Services are provided by the One Stops and guided by its 17 partners. This model has since been replicated by subcontracting Business Services to economic development agencies or and the Chamber of Commerce in four other counties.

⁴ In a few areas of the country, four-year state colleges or specially funded technical colleges serve the functions of community colleges in offering short term training, one-year certificates, associate degrees, and customized services. This section applies to partnerships with these institutions as well as with community colleges.

only professionals capable of developing new training for local employers. WIBs partner with local colleges to provide a variety of business services. The WIBs consulted mentioned relationships with community colleges over 200 times during the discussions. Community college partnerships take different forms. For example, the colleges:

- **Accommodate existing occupational programs** to the specific needs of local employers in collaboration with the WIB and local businesses. The programs may include individual training classes, short-term courses, or degree programs.
- **Provide customized training under contract** with the WIB, with third party funding groups (e.g. state and federal agencies) or with the busi-

nesses themselves.

- **Operate One-Stop Career Centers**, which work directly with businesses to provide comprehensive services from recruitment to long-term training.
- **Staff business assistance centers** in partnership with the WIB to provide such specialized services as consulting on human resource needs, job analysis, curriculum development, customized training, management and supervision classes, and incumbent worker training at the employer's site.

Local community colleges are statutory members of the WIBs themselves and sit on WIB committees charged with addressing business service needs.

Community College Collaboration

The *East Baton Rouge Parish WIB* industry-based initiative with the local community college includes a Process Technician in Manufacturing (PTEC) training program developed for local manufacturers and a short-term training program for Licensed Practical Nursing program developed for the health care industry.

Three Rivers WIB's Regional Intern Center in the Pittsburgh area works with 34 area community colleges and universities to connect college students with employer internships, thus serving the needs of the employers, students in need of work experience, and the colleges.

Lancaster County Workforce Investment Board in Pennsylvania created industry driven Centers for Excellence to coordinate workforce services for seven targeted industries (healthcare, biotechnology, communications, construction, metals, agriculture-food processing, and automotive). The local community college is a critical partner in providing the extensive education and training services needed by the various industries.

The Central Texas Workforce Board has a fully integrated system jointly sponsored by the community college, the chamber of commerce, the economic development agency and the WIB. A cosponsored resource center offers businesses a place to get help on marketing plans, to hold workshops, to get training assistance, and other services.

South Central Michigan Works! developed a partnership for customized and incumbent worker training in conjunction with community colleges and economic development training agencies.

HIGH SCHOOLS

Employers depend upon local schools and colleges to provide future workers and to train existing workers. The academic and skill requirements of jobs are generally rising but local schools may not be providing the education to meet those needs. WIBs indicated that many employers are interested in youth endeavors and view youth as an important local source of workers.

To address these issues, WIBs organize partnerships with the local public school systems. These education partnerships are often an outgrowth of a business service strategy that focuses on educational reform. Employers often find it difficult to navigate the educational system and articulate their current or future needs to educators. WIBs can act as catalysts in developing long term systemic solutions to ongoing employer needs.

As a part of an overall strategy to help prepare the workforce to meet employers' needs, WIBs serve as facilitators between employers and schools to bring about general education improvement or to institute new education and training programs at the schools or colleges.

Education Partnerships

The *Boston Private Industry Council (PIC)* — Boston's Workforce Investment Board — chose an education reform strategy when it created Boston Compact, at the request of local business to help improve the city's school system. The 20-year-old initiative involves raising academic standards and integrating high school students into the workforce. This effort incorporates job shadowing, PIC staff working in various high schools, and intensive involvement by the business community in providing worksites, mentors, and instructors.

WorkNet Pinellas in Pinellas County in Florida arranges for schoolteachers to work in the One-Stop Center to provide employability skills training.

The *North Central Wisconsin WIB* partnered with area schools and employers to develop the Employability Worker Certificate for students and job seekers, which is recognized by both schools and employers.

The *Northwest Wisconsin CEP JobFit Talent Profiling System* has been implemented by 21 high school districts as a career counseling tool, and all of those students are now being exposed to the US Department of Labor O*NET occupational skills system as well.

STAFFING AGENCIES

One-Stop Centers and staffing firms both provide recruitment, screening, testing, and placement services for employers. A number of WIBs have developed cooperative programs so that the two types of organizations work together rather than compete. A number of other workforce boards indicated that they work closely with temporary staffing firms but consider them business customers rather than partners.

Staffing Agency Partners

The *Three Rivers WIB* in Pittsburgh reported that its One-Stop Center system has placed a large number of participants with staffing firms and that many of the temporary positions have become permanent. The One-Stop Center has also rented space to staffing firms for recruiting. The established relationship with staffing firms allows the Center to provide training for staffing agency applicants who need to improve their technical skills in order to be hired.

The *Trident WIB* in South Carolina has started a program with staffing agencies for the Low Country Manufacturing Council, a partnership among the local chamber of commerce, staffing firms, manufacturers, and the public workforce system. The partners train jobseekers for an industry approved “manufacturing worker” certificate. The staffing agencies conduct the training and place certified workers in “temporary-to-permanent” positions with local manufacturing companies. The WIB also leases space in its One-Stop Center to two staffing agencies that have a major presence in the region.

The *Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Council* in Parkersburg, West Virginia posts jobs for temporary staffing firms and expects to partner with a local staffing firm to help recruit employees trained in keyboarding, coding, etc., for a new insurance claims processing center. A temporary staffing firm manager with a broad base of industry experience is a member of the WIB as well.

MEETING CHALLENGES

In the course of the discussions, WIBs provided information on what they thought were key challenges affecting workforce boards' business services. WIBs interviewed acknowledged that having recognized their challenges, some they were able to overcome in the course of time, while others are ongoing. The challenges that were identified in conversations are not meant to be comprehensive; rather they are meant to provide a basis for discussion among WIBs working toward improving business services.

SUSTAINING LEADERSHIP

The WIBs consulted consistently said that sustaining leadership from the board members and WIB executives is the greatest challenge to providing workforce services to business. WIB leadership sets the tone for the entire organization, lays out the measures of successful performance for the staff, and allocates resources to get the job done. The challenge is to maintain such focused leadership during turnover in local elected officials, WIB membership, WIB personnel, and partner staff.

It takes time to develop staff expertise, to understand the local economy and workforce, and to gain the trust of employers. WIBs ranging from Tulare and San Diego counties in California, through Northwest Wisconsin and Clarkesville, Tennessee to Boston, Massachusetts, Bridgeport, Connecticut and Brevard County, Florida have been focused on their business customers for 10 years or more. The representatives of these and other active WIBS say that it often took years for their programs to have a major impact in their community.

SETTING PRIORITIES

WIB representatives consulted said that the quality of business services programs rests squarely upon a clear set of priorities integrated into the WIB and affiliated One-Stop Career Center budgets, organization, staff training, and allocation of staff time.

Yet, consciously and publicly choosing among com-

peting priorities in the funding and budgeting processes, ensuring that chosen priorities are communicated to all staff and partners and are embedded into WIB operations from top to bottom, and maintaining priorities in changing economic and political conditions are all major challenges to establishing effective business service programs. It is far easier to provide lip service to the idea of business services without actually reallocating resources away from other attractive alternatives, WIBs said.

CHANGING PROGRAM CULTURE

One of the reasons for the importance of sustained leadership is the fact that establishing an effective business service program requires an overhaul in the program culture of the traditional workforce development organizations. Such change takes time and effort and has been a major challenge for WIBs trying to become more business demand-driven.

Workforce development system staff has traditionally been oriented to job seekers' employment and social service needs. Workforce staff often has little or no experience working in the private sector and little

The Challenge of Changing Culture

The *River Valley WIB*, serving three counties west of Chicago, reported that making the organization more demand-driven has required a huge "mind shift" involving setting benchmark standards and holding staff accountable. In some cases, it has meant hiring entirely new staff with private sector backgrounds.

The *Northwest Wisconsin WIB* director said that the transition to a more business minded system is the most challenging issue he faces and that it has taken years to change the orientation of the staff of workforce organizations he deals with.

training in developing ongoing relationships with employers other than to facilitate job matching.

The traditional program culture is reinforced by legislatively mandated performance measures, which track and reward service to individuals rather than to employers. WIBs said that this mindset affects all aspects of the organization and how staff thinks about everything from the mission of the organization to the allocation of resources and the selection and training of employees.

INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

Several of the WIBs consulted strongly emphasized the importance of aligning staff and resources to ensure priority to business services. If business services are just another assignment to existing staff and programs, they will not likely be successful, according

to those consulted.

While it is unclear whether the exact form of the organization affects success, it is largely dependent upon local conditions, priorities, and strategies. Business services provided by WIBs in various parts of the country are administered by

1. WIB staff directly,
2. One-Stop Center staff,
3. Other public agencies in partnership with the WIB,
4. Private entities under subcontract,
5. Any combination of these.⁵

Incorporation Can Help WIBs Focus on Business

Some WIBs have chosen to incorporate as nonprofit organizations to help the WIB focus on business services. For example:

The *Workforce Essentials Inc.* in Clarksville, Tennessee organized as a private nonprofit corporation to give it more flexibility in delivering business services. The Board spokesman reported that the Board found that operating as a government entity was organizationally and legally constraining in allowing the Board to respond appropriately to businesses. Functioning through a private organization allows the workforce board to see itself as directing an “operating business” and not as being attached to a unit of local government.

The *Three Rivers WIB* was formed two years ago as a private nonprofit corporation in part because it believed that a corporate and private foundation would be more likely to provide contributions to support business services than they would to a government agency. The organization has been able to increase outside income and expand its services to business, according to the WIB spokesman.

About 45 percent of all WIBs are incorporated as nonprofit organizations; most have been incorporated for years. From the information gathered, there is no direct evidence that incorporation, in itself, leads to increased services for businesses. But given the right circumstances, incorporation can help change internal culture and external perceptions of the WIB.

⁵ Examples of WIBs that subcontract with outside organizations include The Bay Area Workforce Development Board, Inc., in Green Bay, Wisconsin, which contracts with a private company to provide business service consultants; the Racine County Wisconsin Workforce Development Center, which contracts out for business consultants to partner agencies, including the local economic development corporation and a local chamber of commerce; and the Brevard Workforce Development Board in Florida which contracts out its business services so as not to divert One-Stop Centers from existing duties.

Seventy percent of the WIBs rely on their One-Stop Career Center staff to provide business services, but often supplement or enhance the business service functions of the One Stop Centers. About half of WIBs (48 percent) have organized separate Business Service Centers staffed by specially trained professionals. These are often located within the One-Stop Centers. WIBs consulted organize separate Business Service units and jointly staff them with partners from community colleges, chambers of commerce or economic development organizations.

Ten of the 48 WIBs contract with other organizations (e.g. the Chamber of Commerce) to provide business services. Staff providing business services receive special training in about 60 percent of the cases and two-thirds require staff to have private sector experience. Some WIBs, especially those with defined sectoral strategies, have experts that specialize in such targeted industries as health care or high tech manufacturing.

The local systems have either a fully dedicated business services staff or at least one manager (56 percent of the total responding) with major responsibility for business services. (In WIBs with small staffs, the director will take the lead in working with businesses.)

An example of how business services are organized comes from *The Cameron County Workforce Development Board—Cameron Works, Inc.* in Texas. This WIB houses Business Services Centers in two of its five One-Stop Centers. Industry specialists provide a wide range services to employers. Business services are marketed to employers using a variety of means including a widely praised website.

The challenge for those organizing business services is that too often the board or political leadership loses interest when it comes to the nuts and bolts of organizing and managing business services. Organizational resistance from One Stop partners and other organizations can prevent effective organization, as well.

DEMONSTRATING VALUE

WIBs consulted cited employer skepticism as a major challenge to effectively serving business. The resistance exists in the perceptions and practices of the customers themselves. Businesses, who could benefit by using the Board's services, do not use them because they are culturally conditioned to believe that publicly funded services must come with red tape and be inefficient. They may also have had poor experience in getting services from public agencies in the past.

Thus, even when local WIBs and One-Stop Centers develop business services strategies, establish new services, and reorient their staff, and have a strong public information program aimed at the business community, they still have to deal with employer perceptions that government entities in general are bureaucratic and unresponsive.

To address this issue, workforce boards use a variety of techniques to demonstrate their responsiveness, customer service, and flexibility. Some WIBs require that business service representatives have relevant private sector experience, while others reach out to their board members to be ambassadors to the business community providing a valuable entrée to potential business customers.

FINDING THE RIGHT MEASURES

WIBs consulted noted that existing mandated performance measures are not designed to promote business services and provide little incentive to invest resources in these endeavors. Existing measures related to placement, wages, job retention, and even customer satisfaction may limit the WIBs or One-Stop Center Staff to take on such labor and resource intensive activities such as partnership development, incumbent worker training, and curriculum development that businesses frequently request.

Seventy percent of the WIBs said they had their own formal measures of performance for their business services activities. Others said they use more informal

Getting Business in the Door

The *Northern Indiana Workforce Investment Board, Inc.* has selected 30 employers, who have not used their services in the past, for special attention. The WIB hopes to show employers that the One-Stop Center can provide a wide range of high quality services. The target companies were chosen from a list recommended by business members of the board themselves. The final group was selected because they had strong hiring potential and good wages. Team members will contact and begin to build a one-on-one relationship.

Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium in California provides free website design training for small businesses. A local software company had designed on-line website development software that requires some training to use. The WIB's web site designer was hired to train small businesses to design and start their own Internet websites. At the end of the one-day class, the businesses have their own operating website that they can maintain themselves. The service has been quite popular with the businesses and provided the WIB an opening to overcome the natural skepticism of the business owners.

The *Tulare County WIB* in California and the *Atlantic/Cape May County WIB* in New Jersey have each hired public relations staff to raise awareness among the business community regarding workforce services available.

feedback from the staff that works directly with the employers and comments from employers or workforce board members. Many say they hold staff accountable for satisfying business customer needs.

While all WIBs consulted agreed that measurement is important, there was no consensus among the WIBs about the best way to measure the success of business services programs. Twenty-three of the 48 WIBs consulted rely on regular customer satisfaction surveys of existing customers to measure the effectiveness of their business services. These surveys range widely in sophistication, according to the WIBs consulted.

Others measures include how much repeat business the WIB gets from businesses, the percent of candidates referred to businesses that are hired, the number of referrals from existing business customers, the number of new business customers recorded each month, and informal feedback to staff and board

members. Fifteen of the 48 have no measures for the effectiveness of their business services.

At least one WIB suggested that it would be good to do general surveys of all businesses to see how many businesses have heard of the WIB or the One-Stop center, and why some businesses have chosen not to use the WIBs services. Of the WIBs consulted only San Diego reported that they currently conduct full-scale assessment surveys of business needs. It was also suggested that objective measures of business satisfaction across workforce areas would be useful.

DEVELOPING RESOURCES

A major challenge for the workforce investment system is to be entrepreneurial in seeking out new funding or finding opportunities to leverage the existing resources in the system. The first principal is that the strategy should drive the pursuit of resources rather than allowing potentially available resources to drive

the strategy. In many cases, working in the context of strategic partnerships can lead to identifying the opportunities for leveraging.

State and local government programs, unions, foundations, and community-based organizations are all potential sources of funding to support business services. Special federal grants from the Department of Labor and other agencies are an option as well.

More than half—55 percent—of the WIBs contacted said they had raised at least some additional funds to support business services from outside sources. These sources included:

- State grants,
- Employer contributions,
- Competitive federal Workforce Investment Act grants from the US Department of Labor,
- Grants from a special federal immigration program (called by its legislative designation “H-1B”) designed to train American workers to meet skill shortages, and
- Foundation grants.

The Bay Area WIB in Wisconsin said that they had obtained special “earmark” appropriation from Congress for the WIB to provide business services. WIBs expect employers to pay for some portion of the cost of incumbent worker training; some require employers to provide a 50 percent match of the costs of training as is required for On-the-Job Training for new workers.

About a quarter (27 percent) also said they charged fees for at least some specialized services. However, none of these indicated that fee-for-service activities were a major source of revenue. Fee-for-Service funds are largely used to cover extraordinary costs of such services as special applicant testing fees or job analysis.

However, attracting large amounts of funding from whatever source does not appear to be the key to becoming active in providing extensive business services. More than half of the active WIBs do not have especially large budgets or significant additional funding from outside sources. None of the WIBs indicated that increased funding was the critical factor in initiating business services. It is important to let the strategic plan drive the pursuit of resources rather than allowing potentially available resources drive the strategies.

CONCLUSIONS

Achieving the vision of a demand-driven Workforce Investment System is a challenge to a workforce investment system that has long been supply-driven. To a large degree the discussions showed that elements of the vision of a demand-driven system are in place in WIBs around the country, but many are evolving to achieve the full vision as was articulated early in this report. Discussions with WIB representatives from all parts of the United States provide a number of insights into the process of providing business services. These include:

- Improved business services will grow out of a vision of a demand-driven workforce investment system,
- An in-depth understanding of the local economy and the needs of individual employers is an essential foundation for providing business services,
- Given limited resources, WIBs need to establish priorities and strategies for targeting employers for more intensive business services,
- WIB must organize their staff and align all of the resources under their authority to ensure business services receive priority,
- Institutional partnerships - with public agencies, education, economic development, business associations - must be continuously nourished to serve the needs of business and new partnerships developed as customer needs evolve,
- Only a sustained commitment to high quality customer service from WIB leaders makes it possible to find solutions to local employers' problems,
- WIBs need to find ways to change workforce program culture and train and reorient program staff to provide demand-driven business services,
- WIBs need to reach beyond provision of standard workforce services to overcome employer skepticism and meet the expressed needs of employers. Often this is more a matter of personal touch and facilitation than it is of developing programs unrelated to the WIBs core competency,
- Providing business services is as much a matter of imagination and desire as of staff size or funding resources,
- New measures of progress and incentives for success of business services are needed. Lack of effective and relevant measures at all levels of the system—federal, state, and local—undermine the ability of the system to become demand-driven.
- Finally, WIBs will need encouragement, training, and assistance to improve business services.

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