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Corporation for a
Skilled Workforce

Good Jobs. Thriving Communities.

One-Stop Career Centers Must be Re-invented to Meet Today's Labor Market Realities

Introduction to One-Stop Career Centers
Version 2.0

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Corporation for a Skilled Workforce is a national nonprofit that partners with government, business, and community leaders to connect workers with good jobs, increase the competitiveness of companies, and build sustainable communities. For more than 20 years, we have been an effective catalyst for change. We identify opportunities for innovation in work and learning and provoke transformative change in policy and practice. We have worked with dozens of workforce investment boards, state workforce agencies, community-based organizations, and colleges to create lasting impact through their collaborative activities.



Introduction to One-Stop Career Centers Version 2.0

In March 2012, Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW) published a concept paper on the future of One-Stop Career Centers urging a radical re-invention to make the centers relevant in today's labor market. During the course of several presentations on the paper over the past year, we received generally supportive feedback from all who heard the new framing. We also had some helpful recommendations for improvements in the paper from influential circles.

Further, CSW itself published major thought pieces that have impact on the One-Stop concepts. These include a concept paper on Career Navigation; recommendations on community college roles in a changing economy ([Community College Transformations: Staying Relevant in a Changing Economy](#)); and a research paper on Michigan's experience with No Worker Left Behind, a long-term, extensive effort to elevate the role of training in re-shaping Michigan's workforce through credential attainment in demand occupations.

This feedback and thinking has bolstered our basic precepts. We believe it is time to strengthen the concepts set forth last March and issue *One-Stop Career Centers Must be Re-invented to Meet Today's Labor Market Realities, Version 2.0*. We hope that this new version will add new depth and strengthen our positioning on the issue of One-Stop Career Center transformation, and how changes within this system also impact and necessitate changes in supporting systems, especially community colleges.

We also want to be crystal clear on what we are proposing. In our vision, One-Stop Career Centers shift from the job matching business which occupies much of the Centers' current bandwidth to [focusing on the core competencies necessary to engage with employers who are willing to invest in upskilling the workforce and to support workers who are willing to engage in a combination of work and learning simultaneously to gain market-relevant skills and credentials and achieve good paying jobs with career potential](#).

Anecdotally, during one of the last presentations made on the paper in 2012, a well-respected workforce professional had his own "Ah ha" moment about one of the core underlying precepts of our thinking: the centers will serve far fewer people than they do today. Our construct certainly limits the pool the Centers will serve. We hope clarifying this proposition and others will spur more intense debate about what the role of the Centers should be.

With this focus, One-Stop Career Centers cannot be a solution to all of our country's workforce or economic needs (note: DOL is moving toward the common brand of American Job Centers to cover all One-Stop Career Centers – since that is a work in progress, we will continue to use the term "One-Stop Career Centers" in this paper). This is not a realistic charge, anyway. Each community has its own set of issues depending on demographics, location, demand, and social factors. We do not expect, for example, that the proposed re-purposing of One-Stop Career Centers will solve issues of disadvantaged youth unemployment and disenfranchisement from society. Those are real problems that will take much work to fix. Similarly, the plight of the long term unemployed is a vexing national issue that requires increases in demand to fix in the long-run and will require new short-term policies to help those impacted stay connected to the labor market while demand builds. There are other macro issues we need to address as a nation, including our need to be competitive with other nations on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education. One-Stop Career Centers are a slice of the workforce world but we think their current roles need to change and with the change we are suggesting, they can add much greater value to advancing our nation's competitiveness.



Context

When One-Stop Career Centers were first implemented as a primary service delivery approach by the U.S. Department of Labor during the mid-1990s, they were the right response to the labor market of the time. The United States was experiencing major upheaval in employment, with many traditionally stable workers being displaced and needing to find new jobs. Because this was a period in which expanding industries faced labor shortages, most workers needed support in finding new employment in which they could use existing skills. Today's world is very different.

It is also different from what it was 12 months ago when CSW first published its thoughts on One-Stop Career Centers. Unemployment has started to come down, moving from 8.3% in January 2012 to 7.7% in February 2013. It should be noted that we still have approximately 4.6 million long-term unemployed workers among those ranks¹. The possible causes of continuing high unemployment are debated in many circles. We find much to ponder in a recent report from the Brookings Institute that looks at unemployment in metropolitan areas. The report² delves deeply into pre- and post-recession unemployment. Two key conclusions are striking to us:

1. Changes in house prices (prompting a reverse wealth effect) and industrial demand explain roughly three-quarters of the trend in unemployment rates across large metropolitan areas since the recession began. However, [metropolitan education gaps explain roughly two-thirds of the variation in the level of unemployment across metro areas](#), posing a longer-run challenge for many regional labor markets.
2. Educational attainment overall and relative to existing demand benefits metro areas by making workers more employable and firms more competitive and entrepreneurial.

What we take away from the Brookings report is while there is clearly insufficient demand for labor to meet supply today, it also is clear educational attainment is important to the health, vitality, and resilience of regions in the face of any economic condition. And that the most promising path to jobs with family sustaining wages is through advanced education and training, resulting in labor market relevant credentials that are valued by employers.

Given this, workers require a workforce system that connects them to quality training services, career counseling to navigate confusing labor market terrain, and opportunities to gain on-the-job experience and skills while helping employers meet their goals.

We are also keenly aware that the workforce system of the 1990's, which was in many ways a funding stream that could target the needs of all, has by necessity become an eco-system of providers and support entities with communities colleges playing vital roles in preparing and re-tooling the workforce. As we will note later the community college system is a growing resource for workforce development, and is undergoing its own fundamental re-framing to make it relevant to today's labor market demands. We cannot speak of the One-Stop Career Centers without considering their relationship to the education system. In our vision, they are very much symbiotic.

The One-Stop Career Centers of the 1990s, as we know them, cannot meet the needs of today's workers and they certainly cannot do it alone.

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Situation Summary, April 5, 2013.

² Rothwell, Jonathan, Brookings Institute. (2012). "Education, Job Openings, and Unemployment in Metropolitan America".



This paper proposes redefining, reinventing and redeploying the current One-Stop Career Centers to transform them into places with the core competencies necessary to engage with employers who are willing to invest in upskilling the workforce and to support workers who are willing to engage in a combination of work and learning simultaneously to gain market-relevant skills and credentials and achieve good paying jobs with career potential.

It is time for a new public workforce investment paradigm that includes rethinking the purpose and role for One-Stop Career Centers, and using this redesign to inform broader transformation of our workforce preparation system. This reinvention requires multiple policy and structural changes to: federal and state policy, community college structures, regional Workforce Investment Board (WIB) priorities and practices, and within the design, services and staffing of individual One-Stop Career Centers.

In summary, the required changes won't be easy, but they're both important and urgent:

- **Millions of at risk workers need to obtain market-relevant post-secondary credentials.** A growing body of evidence suggests that for most workers, completion of learning beyond a high school diploma is central to being able to find employment with family-supporting pay. It is also a key element of our future economic competitiveness.³
- **One-Stop Career Centers struggle to meet today's needs with a model designed for a different economy.** Based on customer demand, many Centers today attempt to do both job matching and provide educational attainment help, and lack the resources and focus to do both well.
- **A continued primary focus on job matching provides questionable value for public investment.** A rapidly emerging set of tools and online resources means this function can occur far more efficiently, and much more often without staff assistance.
- **It is time for a new public workforce investment paradigm that includes rethinking the purpose and role for One-Stop Career Centers.** We urge transforming One-Stop Career Centers into places with the core competencies necessary to engage with employers who are willing to invest in upskilling the workforce and to support workers who are willing to engage in a combination of work and learning simultaneously to gain market-relevant skills and credentials and achieve good paying jobs with career potential.

³ Prince, Heath and Vickie Choitz, CLASP Center of Postsecondary and Economic Success. (April 2012). "The Credential Differential".



The Current Challenges

The public workforce system has moved from one originally designed to serve the disadvantaged by providing short-term training and skill development to one that has too many roles and target groups to serve effectively. We have seen first-hand the struggles associated with expecting One-Stop Career Centers to possess the various competencies needed to serve incredibly diverse target groups with fragmented programs through a chaotic mix of roles. The challenges associated with our current state are further defined below.

Wide-Ranging Customer Demands and Service Priorities

Today, the system is legislatively mandated to be universal, offering a basic level of services for anyone who needs them. Those basic services include job search assistance, labor market information, limited assessments of needs and skills, community asset information, career information, and in some cases, more in-depth assessments, resume preparation, job clubs, and workshops.

For adults meeting a locally determined test of eligibility, or dislocated workers who cannot find jobs on their own and are deemed appropriate for additional investment, the system is supposed to provide intensive assessment and supportive services. The current construct envisions a smaller cohort being enrolled in training, when the combination of core and intensive services do not produce a job.⁴

Priority for these services varies greatly. Unemployment recipients are prioritized in many states due to the tremendous pressure on the public workforce system (primarily the One-Stop Career Centers) to get potentially long-term Unemployment Insurance claimants back to work as quickly as possible and reduce the burden on states' Unemployment Insurance Trust funds Federal Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC). There is continuing pressure to place Unemployment Insurance recipients in jobs to cut the cost of benefits at both the state and federal levels. Federal law also prioritizes Veterans. Furthermore, each Workforce Investment Board sets a local priority of service that, for example, may emphasize services to individuals with disabilities, TANF recipients, long-term unemployed, ex-offenders, youth age 18-24, or other target groups.

Even in a good economy, these multiple demands and multiple target audiences stretched the capacity of the system beyond what it could bear with the typical result that short-term, universal interventions serving larger numbers were favored over long-term, more intensive interventions.

Placement vs. Training

As explained above, the current One-Stop Career Centers typically emphasize immediate job placement rather than high-skill training services. Unfortunately, as short-term, universal interventions have been favored as a means by which to achieve rapid re-employment, and as WIA dollars have shrunk, the result has been fewer and fewer people trained under the Workforce Investment Act – 12% of enrollees in the past three years.⁵ Further, what training has been provided has typically been short term to assist with rapid reattachment to the labor market – just 24% of WIA training participants are in programs longer than one year.⁶ In some cases this has been consistent with the wishes of customers who urgently need to return to work as quickly as possible. In other cases, this focus has deprived motivated

⁴ Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Section 134 (d).

⁵ CSW analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Labor's WIASRD Annual Reports, covering 2008-2010.

⁶ Ibid.



clients the opportunity to earn meaningful credentials that can support their long-term viability in a changing labor market. This short-term focus has exacerbated a widening skills mismatch while depriving employers of an adequate supply of skilled workers to meet their needs.

There is significant evidence that earning meaningful postsecondary credentials can improve workers' long-term connections to the labor market.⁷ We do see some rays of light at scale that point to more emphasis on longer term, labor relevant training. Under Michigan's former Governor, Jennifer Granholm, the state cobbled together multiple funding streams to offer up to two years of postsecondary training to any dislocated worker in the state or any worker in a family earning \$40,000 or less. Over 100,000 Michiganders took advantage of this opportunity. Early results from an analysis of participant surveys of Michigan's No Worker Left Behind Program show promising results.⁸

We are also keenly aware there is a complex set of dynamics that impact the relationship between work and learning. Further research from CEW in the June 2012 publication "Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees" cites two key lessons learned: 1) certificate attainment is most successful when certificate holders are able to work in field; 2) the extent to which institutions can promote in-field work via, for example, job placement programs, will affect their graduates' success significantly in becoming gainfully employed.⁹

[What we glean from this research and more like it is the clear need for education and training beyond what the norm has been within One-Stop career Centers and the need for education in the right occupations that show growth and earning potential.](#) Paramount to success is better employer engagement to support work-based learning, coupled with better relationships with capable education partners offering market-relevant certificates and credentials, as well as better career navigation strategies within the Centers. The One-Stop Career Centers have the opportunity to become the intermediaries where all of these responses converge.

The notion of a stronger emphasis on longer-term educational opportunities within our system is a radical departure from what has previously been expected of One-Stop Career Centers, but not an entirely new idea. Many workforce researchers and policy advocates have articulated a need for increased training and education through the One-Stop Career Centers.

For example, in 2007 John Wallace of MDRC posited a vision for One-Stop Career Centers of the future that would "assist low-wage workers and their employers in raising job retention and advancement rates, along with the rate of receipt of work supports"¹⁰.

⁷ *The Economist* noted recently that unemployment for adults with postsecondary credentials is 4%, as compared to 9% for those with only a high-school diploma - to say nothing of the rates for non-high-school-graduates. We also know a postsecondary credential will only become more important to long-term career success, given research by Anthony Carnevale suggesting that 63% of jobs by 2018 will require some postsecondary education.

⁸ Floyd, Carrie and Larry Good, Holy Parker, Kathy Stocking, Corporation for a Skilled Workforce. (June 2013). "Perspectives on No Worker Left Behind: Results from a Participant Survey".

⁹ Carnevale, Anthony, Stephen J. Rose, and Andres R. Hanson, The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. (June 2012). "Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees".

¹⁰ Wallace, John, MDRC. (January 2007). Concept Paper "A Vision for the Future of the Workforce Investment System".



The Center for American Progress (CAP) in 2009 advocated that One-Stop Career Centers should be places where workers can have better access to education. Their paper, “Working Learners”,¹¹ holds that current policy recommendations are but a first step “to address the nation’s need for a well-trained workforce and the needs of those who have entered the workforce but who require further education to get ahead. These ‘working learners’ are now served by a system that is overly focused on crisis intervention at the point of unemployment and getting people back into jobs, and not sufficiently on the need for training and education”.

In “Moving from Short-Term Jobs to Long-Term Skills”¹², Louis Soares furthers this point, stating that, “Workforce development in the 21st century should be about postsecondary credential attainment for working learners – individuals ages 18 to 64 who are already in the workforce but lack a postsecondary credential.” CAP’s recommendations to the Senate HELP Committee on proposed 2012 WIA reauthorization¹³ enumerated a set of recommendations to focus WIA on human capital development, leading to at least a one-year credential; this recommendation still holds true a year later as WIA reauthorization is debated once again. At the time of this writing, the House of Representatives had passed the majority’s bill on WIA reauthorization, essentially the same bill introduced in 2012;; therefore, we believe these comments have the same relevance they did last year.

So we have two very big issues to contend with – putting the unemployed back to work as rapidly as possible, but also investing the time and resources to increase the number of workers with the skills to support the current economy. At first blush these can seem to be competing priorities. But if we are open to re-thinking the One-Stop Career Center model entirely, we can craft a design that allows Centers to build the competencies necessary to tackle these issues integratively.

¹¹ Soares, Louis, Center for American Progress. (June 2009). “Working Learners, Educating our Entire Workforce for Success in the 21st Century”.

¹² Soares, Louis, Center for American Progress. (May 2010). “Moving from Short-Term Jobs to Long-Term Skills – Priorities for Workforce Investment Act Reauthorization”.

¹³ Steigleder, Stephen, Center for American Progress. (June 2011). “CAP’s Guide to the Senate HELP Committee’s Draft Bill to Reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act”.



What Should Be Different?

Current		Future
Strategic employer engagement to support training		
Workers choose skills enhancement or jobs	➔	Workers gain credentials + jobs
One-Stop Career Centers engage employers in transactions		One-Stop Career Centers build long-term relationships with employers, using sector strategies focused on employers with need for trained workers and committed to work and learning models
One-Stop Career Centers and community colleges generally operate as separate entities		One-Stop Career Centers and community colleges work seamlessly with employers and workers to meet the needs of both customer bases, resulting in attainment of labor market relevant credentials
Career navigation as a framework for support		
One-Stop Career Centers provide labor market information	➔	As a core function of the Centers, One-Stop Career Centers provide deep career navigation services for its customers using the latest in career analysis tools
Managing for Long-Term Success		
Staff trained on generic One-Stop processes or credentialed on general promising practices in current One-Stop operations	➔	Staff credentialed in career navigation and employer engagement
Short-term program outcomes drive center management		Long- term system outcomes drive center management

Key Components of a New One-Stop Delivery System

In our vision, for those interested in a work and learning environment, the One-Stop customer service representative would be charged with assessing clients and connecting them with employers and quality educational opportunities. This assessment may be conducted jointly with community colleges so that academic preparedness can be assessed and plans for integrating any remediation with occupational learning can be put in place. After good employer-jobseeker matches are found, the employers would support the worker to earn a labor market credential of value to the employer, through flexible scheduling, tuition reimbursement, and work-based supports, working with community colleges and other providers including employers themselves. The Centers also would work closely with partner organizations to serve those with very low skill levels who may need different and more intensive support that should include bridge programs, work supports and transitional employment in conjunction with learning opportunities through work. The option for business start-up support would also be available.

- Focus on labor market-relevant credentials leading to long-term employment, not just short-term job placement;



- Strategic employer engagement, moving away from passive labor exchange relationships;
- Strong employer commitment to work and learning models, including methods to allow workers to work and learn simultaneously, on-the-job training opportunities and other experiential learning opportunities leading to credentials;
- New services to help identify career paths that fit the customer and have labor market pay-off;
- Information and resource brokering are the key services to be delivered;
- Centers and community colleges are integrated partners with possible co-location, shared career navigation resources, and accountable for shared goals and outcomes;
- Reinvented delivery capacity, including retrained and reoriented service delivery staff and a new distributed model of delivery;
- New measures of success that align with the new goals; and
- Community support for a new system that is tied to community economic success, with key community stakeholders seeing a strong value proposition for the One-Stop Career Centers.

Strategic Employer Engagement to Support Learning

Eliminating the False Dichotomy Between School and Work

In this model, One-Stop Career Centers would work with community colleges and other partners to help clients meet their needs for employment and educational attainment integratively, helping workers quickly find jobs that can be combined with education. Workers should no longer have to focus solely on work or school. Rather, they should have opportunities to focus on employment offering educational opportunities. This is a radical departure from today's model, but it is a shift that could make the centers truly relevant in the skill advancement world – becoming more critical to employers facing skills shortages and to workers needing immediate re-employment.

Repurposed One-Stop Career Centers could work with employers to develop combinations of work and learning opportunities that enable workers to become learners. Promising employer practices illustrate flexible models that encourage workers to learn, devote resources to funding educational opportunities for workers, and connect workers to experiential education opportunities, including on-the-job training, apprenticeship models, and internships.

Entrepreneurship must be included as a function. Business start-ups are a core of future economic growth. These new businesses provide employment for others beyond the owner and help to create secondary and tertiary demand, thus positively impacting a regional economy at multiple levels. Centers can serve as the place to connect potential entrepreneurs with training on how to do start-ups right (an emerging core business for community colleges) and with funding opportunities as well as businesses willing to support a variety of models such as investing in spin-offs or improved supply chains.

Shifting to Strategic Employer Engagement to Support Learning

Centers currently are focusing their interactions with employers and workers on passive, but administratively weighty, activities to connect workers with available employment opportunities and track these outcomes whether facilitated by the system or not. In many cases, individuals find employment on their own but are counted as “successes” because they are in the tracking system and are connected to services even if the service is simply checking to see if they got a job. There are certainly variations on this theme, and in some cases more intensive services *are* provided, but job matching remains at the core of current One-Stop Center operations.



We fully recognize that moving away from job matching runs counter to the focus of the Wagner-Peyser Act, a major One-Stop partner which provides rapid job matching services. We also recognize there is a real need for such services by a limited number of customers. However, we believe much of that can be accomplished through well-staffed Resource Rooms with the current online tools available to participants at the Centers, as well as through more robust competencies in career navigation at other service locations including and especially in community colleges.¹⁴

Moving away from large scale staff intensive job matching would make it possible to focus resources more fully on strategic engagements with employers. For example, a number of workforce boards and One-Stop Career Centers have begun undertaking sector strategies. These efforts bring together employers within an industry and facilitate a partnership between them and key educators to identify industry issues and solutions. Such issues include training needs, curricula content, effective hiring and retention strategies, as well as identifying career pathways for employees and job seekers. It is a fundamentally different way of doing business – one that is focused on meeting the needs of both employers and workers. Sector strategies continue to gain strength as a proven way of engaging employers.¹⁵

Strategic employer engagement is a key element to facilitating linkages between work and learning. Integrating work and learning requires changing long held perceptions that work and learning must occur sequentially rather than simultaneously. Moreover, employers must embrace a new reality of finding qualified workers which may include a stronger emphasis on upskilling new and existing employees. One-Stop Career Centers already have staff engaging employers. What’s required in many cases is moving that engagement from the task level of taking job orders to working with companies and industries at a strategic level. This is a wholly different type of engagement and could result in dramatically better results, but would require professional development for staff. Taking a sector-based approach calls for working with employers providing jobs with family sustaining wages, and/or pathways to these jobs, and who are willing to engage in processes and practices that support acquisition of relevant credentials through shared time for work and learning, reimbursement for education, and other means that help workers increase their skills while working.

Career Navigation as a Framework for Support.

Expanding the Career Navigation Role

The biggest role Centers currently play is job matching. At the end of the day, success is defined by how many people exit from the system with jobs that produce increased wages and retention. We see two schools of thought on this issue. On one side, there are those who say that the private market has filled the space occupied by state job matching systems and that workers with some computer skills can find jobs on their own through the private sites or through their own networking.

¹⁴ The Employment and Training Administration released a study of One-Stop self-services based on activity in 2005 through 2007 that concluded “Overall, the results demonstrated the considerable potential of the self-service delivery system to reach a large number of customers and to facilitate their access to an array of resources and tools that can assist them in conducting a job search and exploring career options. Resource rooms offer comfortable and inviting environments and staff are professional and do their best to be helpful. The service offerings are rich, and customers generally rate the services they use favorably”.

¹⁵ Woolsey, Lindsey (Woolsey Group LLC) and Garrett Grove (NGA), Joint Publication of Corporation for a Skilled Workforce, National Skills Coalition, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. (January 2013). “State Sector Strategies Coming of Age: Implications for State Workforce Policy Makers”.



On the other hand, we see a much deeper need for professional career navigators who can help everyone – those coming out of school as well as those displaced from the workforce. We say this because we see so much time and effort is wasted on false starts and poor career choices that could be improved – not eradicated, but improved – by better career navigation support. Our early thinking raised the issue of need for this service.¹⁶ Our thinking has evolved to look at this as more a set of competencies that multiple organizations should have rather than what have been taken as a call for specific positions to be created for more career navigation staff.

In our new vision of One-Stop Career Centers, competent career navigation services would be available through various means within a community. Within the Centers, we envision bolstering the quality and consistency of resource rooms – allowing most clients to access technology-aided self-help tools for job matching and some skill development, such as computer competency enhancement or resume writing.

We must ensure that the frontline capacity exists to maximize the tools that are emerging today. One aspect of career navigation is taking advantage of the recent breakthroughs in labor market information using detailed analysis of job listings to project occupations in growth and the skills needed to fill them.

Distributing Services to Improve Access

In our vision, we do not see there is one place that everybody should go for career navigation services. These services have to be in places that are convenient for those in need – in schools, in libraries, in community based organizations, and for those whom we propose will be served by the new One-Stop Career Centers, in the Centers.

Given the functions in this new model, and the range of services and tools that now can be accessed over the internet, we must consider whether there are more efficient ways to deliver the same services than by operating relatively large brick-and-mortar sites carrying high real estate costs that eat up a significant share of One-Stop Career Center budgets. We need to think about cost-effective opportunities to distribute services throughout our communities beyond the one WIA-mandated physical One-Stop Center in each Local Workforce Investment Area. A significant number of Workforce Investment Boards have experimented with the creative use of satellite locations, and that offers a body of knowledge that can be used to inform redesigning the delivery model to take advantage of logical community resources and centers at marginal cost, such as libraries, community centers, or schools. We also see the potential for far higher levels of integrated services with community colleges. We have the technology for joint assessments and joint planning from just about anywhere. With a combination of competent staff and good web-based tools, a distributed model can make services available close at hand to diverse customers while being affordable.

For employers, many WIBs have adopted a distributed approach to employer services, in the belief that going to employer sites and communicating electronically is more effective than asking them to come to a One-Stop Center. In this new One-Stop concept, that approach will be even more crucial; employer engagement would become a function led by employers -- and would occur where it meets their needs. Similarly, job-seeker engagement in this new model is not exclusively Center-based. Instead, people seeking help would be able to choose among going to a full service center, a community college, a convenient mini-site, and/or online to obtain services.

¹⁶ Corporation for a Skilled Workforce, “Catalyzing the Development of Robust Career Navigation Supports, A Working Concept, Carrie Floyd, May 2012



Managing for Long-Term Success

Shifting to System Measurement

From the beginning of WIA, the system has been plagued by simply not being a real system but a cobbling together of different programs with separate performance measures, beholden to the federal funding agencies. We need consistent measures for Centers – not for programs but for *Centers*. In spite of not offering a physical co-location of partners, One-Stop Career Center efforts can reflect much more tightly organized collaborations of agencies with common goals. We can and should craft metrics that align with what we ask the re-imagined One-Stop Career Centers to deliver, and then use those metrics at a Center level, not an agency or program level.

Possible candidates for a few core measures for One-Stop Career Centers include, but are not limited to: number of clients who acquire labor market relevant credentials through employer support; number of clients who attain a job with family sustaining wages (may be measured in progressions to recognize this multi-step process requires staying with a customer over a much longer period of time); and total employer contributions to the process of work and learning. We also believe there is potential for joint measures that would apply to community colleges and Centers together. These might focus on speed of progression through training, level of employer engagement in training, retention in training (since this is a first step in retention in a job), and relevance of course offerings to labor market demand.

Engaging Partners to Create Opportunity

The core of this new approach is about working together to create economically thriving communities. Civic engagement and the support, alignment and contributions of a variety of stakeholders are critical for ensuring success. In order to do this, Center leadership will need to engage local elected officials and the community in discussing, modeling, and bringing local context to the model and serve as champions for a new model that is tied to economic development and community vitality. Stakeholder alignment in support of a new One-Stop Career Center proposition will come through information sharing and dialogue. We believe getting to this deep level of civic engagement is crucial to the overall success of a work and learning model.

Key Implementation Competencies

Staff members are the most critical component in ensuring that this new approach is effective at addressing client and employer needs. Extensive staff training will be needed to shift to a different employer and jobseeker interaction process. Staff will be required to be more highly skilled at employer engagement and better able to provide intense career navigation support to customers to ensure they can access resources. Service providers, including in many cases, community colleges, must look at their roles with a new perspective. It must be made clear what is required to qualify as a provider in a new approach. Without a dedicated, energized, and fully capable staff and service providers, the effort will not succeed.

To be more specific we envision staff highly trained in employer engagement techniques and career navigation skills. The most prominent credentialing system for One-Stop Career Center staff currently in use is the one developed by the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP). According to a recent survey jointly conducted by the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) and NAWDP, of those areas that use workforce professional credentials, nearly 50% use



the NAWDP system.¹⁷ The NAWDP competencies for its credentials were originally published in 2004 and have been recently updated. The competencies are due to go into effect in August 2013. The revised competencies reflect a solid grounding in today's labor markets and are appropriately attuned to the realities of the current One-Stop system – reflecting the dual roles of job matching and training. We have high regard for the work NAWDP has done and do not negate the power of its competencies in the system as it is today. We also note that there is overlap in the general titles of what we think needs to be emphasized in a new paradigm versus what is in place today. NAWDP's competencies cover nine key areas: business and economic development intelligence; career development principles; collaboration and problem solving; customer service methodology; diversity in workforce development; labor market information and intelligence; principles of communication; program implementation principles & strategies; and workforce development structure, policies and programs. The NAWDP credentialing model is voluntary but has been widely adopted as part of state One-Stop Career Center certification processes. We believe it is time to make professional credentialing a required part of the Center operation model and to have core competencies that all those engaging job seekers and employers must possess.

Career Navigation Competencies

One set of those core competencies is around career navigation. There is much needed work to be done to agree on a strong set of career navigation competencies and we have identified this work as one our key recommendations for follow-up to this report. We do note that some of the terminology we use overlap with the current NAWDP competencies but, for example, we see a deeper set of career navigation competencies needed – ones that allow working intensely with a job seeker or employer using the most up to date and sophisticated labor market analysis techniques. We also believe re-certification will be needed much more frequently than the three year cycle NAWDP allows. In fairness, the recent advances in labor market analysis are quite new and are evolving constantly as the processes improve and become more powerful. Like almost everything today, the rate of change is geometric. We offer here a starter list of general career navigation competencies that might pertain to One-Stop center staff, acknowledging some of the concepts are similar to those within the NAWDP system :

- Deep knowledge of the latest labor market information tools that use job spidering of on-line job postings to obtain real-time occupational growth and skills needs.
- High degree of collaborative skills to interact with multiple partners, especially employers and community colleges.
- Knowledge of local practices on job preparation to include requirements for remediation and resources to prepare workers who have not been in school in several years to be successful in remediation testing.
- Knowledge of the best practices in credential attainment, to include stackable credentials and career pathways within growth sectors.
- Knowledge of local employer practices on developing their workforce.
- Knowledge of all aspects of local community college practices, including their change strategies to be more responsive to employer needs and how these strategies can impact workers interested in work and learning integration.

¹⁷ National Association of Workforce Boards and National Association of Workforce Development Professionals. (October 2010). "Workforce Development Professional Credential Survey Results".



- Knowledge of the best national, state, and local practices on work and learning integration to not only access current opportunities but to be able to influence change in local systems to be more open to such integration.
- Knowledge of the art of persuasion (this is a positive term not a negative one as is often the first blush reaction) to help people make good and informed choices.

Employer Engagement Competencies:

Many of the career navigation skills apply to employers as well but must be re-framed for a different audience. For example, the use of emerging labor market analysis techniques can be useful to job seekers, as well as helpful to employer outreach staff who need to show understanding of and value to employers they engage. Note that knowledge of labor market trends is not the same as good employer engagement practices but is clearly a prerequisite to being able to do good employer engagement. We offer here a starter list of general employer engagement competencies that might pertain to One-Stop center staff:

- Knowledge of sector strategies in general and how to engage businesses through them
- Using local business trends in the growth sectors assigned to inform employers
- Using career ladder models in growth sectors that can inform employers
- Messaging techniques to employers about the benefits of participating in credential enhancement programs
- Cost-benefit analysis (this may be a central function that feeds data to employer engagement staff) on the ROI of training investments
- Discerning different roles for different employer types e.g. some can contribute to metrics relevant to their industry while others might be more knowledgeable about training capacity
- Developing a database of employers with specific information relevant to their needs
- Developing a shared agenda for action with employers that meets their specific needs
- Developing a sustainability plan for employer engagement

Building Momentum

In the first version of the One-Stop Career Center paper, we suggested both testing some of the precepts in the paper at the state and local levels and also facilitating a national dialogue about the future of One-Stop Career Centers leading up to recommendations for new legislation. We have engaged in dialogue with a number of stakeholders about this concept. These conversations have helped to inform what we see as the next steps for building momentum for this movement.

We now have three specific ways in which we would like to advance the ideas in the paper.

1. Continue our efforts to affect federal policymaking as it relates to the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and the One-Stop Career Centers. We believe there is still a need for a national dialogue on the future of One-Stop Career Centers. We hope that this updated paper will resonate with those who might be interested in sponsoring such a dialogue and will continue to seek out opportunities for support for that effort, especially where such dialogue can influence the direction policymakers go as they consider WIA reauthorization and related policies. Our precepts are a radical departure from what is on the table in the current WIA reauthorization discussion. A contrarian view often opens doors to broader thinking. Closer to the current



proposals, we believe the concepts of core competencies in the two key areas of employer engagement and career navigation can enrich the reauthorization discussion.

2. As we pursue federal policy change to support our vision, we also believe there are short-term efforts we can undertake to shift the way business is done in Centers today. We intend to focus a body of research on the competencies needed to operate in our new paradigm—including career navigation and employer engagement competencies. We also see application of the competencies in institutions beyond the Centers themselves, including reshaped community colleges. Identifying the competencies required to move toward the model we envision will help leaders incorporate our ideas into current operations as we await more sweeping policy change.
3. Continue to encourage national dialogue on this topic. This Version 2.0 is an update to our original paper. The core precepts we believe still carry over but we have learned much over the past year and will continue to refine our ideas based on discussions with stakeholders. We set up social media avenues to capture reactions to the first paper. We will strengthen the social media interaction modalities for Version 2.0 and anticipate these will be the primary ways we will gather feedback on our refined ideas. We welcome input and reaction and intend to keep up our social media points of entry and to engage in a virtual dialogue on the topic at-large and our specific next steps.

We hope all who read this paper will join in the ongoing dialogue on the future of One-Stop Career Centers and career navigation competencies. You can join the discussion on our blog at www.skilledwork.tumblr.com.

