

Item IV.

**Council on Workforce Investment
Position Detail on Workforce Investment Act Reauthorization
June 11, 2010 CWI Meeting**

Expand training opportunities and increase employer engagement: Provide a broader range of training opportunities related to occupational skill sets in regional demand occupations that encourages the highest caliber of training providers.

- Eliminate the Individual Training Account requirement and make it easier to develop training strategies geared to customized class sized training programs.
- Require a percentage of formula funds be spent for training expenditures in order to ensure a sufficient amount of funding is used to train participants and develop skills needed to succeed in the labor market.
- Expand incumbent worker training opportunities to upgrade the skills of currently employed individuals.
- Encourage the use of career pathways and bridge programs to support the skills advancement of working adults as well as programs for workers and English language learners needing basic skills
- Encourage the use of regional employer-driven industry sector strategies for service delivery and worker training that leads to efficiencies and industry innovation.
- To improve efficiency of the public workforce system and to avoid providing unnecessary services in the enrollment process, eliminate the sequence of services requirement.

Currently, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) constricts the potential of a full array of training providers and the type of training. Extending more training opportunities beyond the current WIA will provide improved matches for participants and expand the trainer pool. These expanded opportunities will also help address the participants who have extensive barriers to employment and those in the untapped potential labor pool. The focus on demand occupations will aid in regional recovery and growth but not limit engagement of small businesses and entrepreneurial training for participants. The Council on Workforce Investment (CWI) has recommended creating employer financial incentives to provide on-site training and/or targeting funds to workforce intermediaries for cross-program job readiness and employability skills training. They also recommended to request the waiver on the 50% employer contributions for on-the-job training and customized training which the full CWI expanded to other State waivers to increase employer engagement.

The CWI Medicaid Infrastructure Committee (MIG) also recommended incentives for private sector employers to be active partners in training and mentoring: "Employers and their managers need to be encouraged and compensated for the time from their typical work duties to mentor individuals who need real life career exploration activities. For example, individuals need to better understand what a job really entails, what could be accommodated, etcetera, before selecting a training path. These mentoring activities would ideally take place before any formalized work experience placement."

The elimination of the sequence of services requirement will allow individuals to receive the services that best meets their needs for positive training and employment placement outcomes. It will also aid in the tailoring of services among one-stop partners for blended support Local boards need to be able to respond quickly to meet service needs by shifting funds that would still require State accountability.

Create sustainable financial support for the One-Stop system infrastructure: Design a stable and equitable funding mechanism to maintain the operating costs of the One-Stop system.

- Require a fair share contribution for the infrastructure among the required One-Stop partners, or set aside a specific amount of funding to provide for the cost of the One-stop infrastructure.
- Promote the use of technology that leads to improved services particularly for rural areas and individuals with disabilities.
- Encourage and financially support funding for essential specialized services at the certified One-Stops including Disability Navigators, and Benefits Specialists.

The CWI has a history of supporting the development of a sustainable infrastructure and a coordinated effort for service delivery among partners. In the past, it has been recommended that WIA "Create sustainable financial support for the One-Stop Infrastructure... and design a 'fair share' allocation method among all of the state-administered workforce E&T programs." It has also been recommended to "Provide incentives for the WDBs' regional activities and collaborative efforts including but not limited to joint program planning, equitable cost sharing of infrastructure and mutual services..."

The CWI MIG Subcommittee recommended that dedicated funding be provided for one-stop partners to systemically address the barriers that are identified through the use of Section 188 compliance reviews. They also recommended fully-funded Benefits Specialist and a Work Incentives Specialist to be required for each certified one-stop. These specialists would greatly improve the ability of individuals with disabilities to determine what is available that will aid in successful training and employment outcomes, as well as analyze the "disincentives" of employment related to long-term care and social service supports. Individuals with disabilities need to be served through the broader workforce system reflecting the intent of WIA's "universal access" for services. Based on the past activities, the Disability Navigators successfully contributed to the delivery of improved services for people with disabilities across the one-stop system. For example, the Disability Navigators in Wisconsin helped Job Center staff and partners find and secure the resources and services necessary to achieve the participant's training and employment goals."

Invest in Youth: Prepare them for the world of work.

- Provide sufficient funding for a permanent Summer Youth Employment and Training Program.
- Emphasize services to high-risk youth and basic skill deficient youth to prepare them for additional training and employment opportunities.
- Eliminate the youth "in-school/out-of-school" requirements.

On behalf of the Council's December 2009 action, the Chair wrote to Congress supporting designated funding for the Summer Youth Program given its proven success for youth to gain work skills and an income. Rather than WIA requiring the focus on school status, one-stop activities need to focus on "working together to implement career pathways to prepare students for the industry sectors of the 21st century...and "increase the awareness and interest in demand occupation employment opportunities available in the region."

"Reauthorization should further reinforce early intervention and demand-side employment models. For youth in particular, dovetailing the transition services and implementing employment goals from elements in individual's education plans would reduce duplication, create easier access for assistance, and advance self-sufficiency in the community."

The emphasis on youth services should be on "at-risk" populations rather than distinguishing whether or not the person is in school.

Improve Governance and Administration: Ensure thorough oversight and quality strategic direction.

- Require smaller employer-led local and state workforce boards with a majority of members from the business community.
- Reduce the required representation of public agencies with a stake in the funding administered by the board.
- Maintain the private sector Chairperson requirement.
- Clearly state, and define that, the role of both State and Local boards is strategic and spans programs beyond WIA.
- Clearly define the role of the boards at it relates to performance oversight and its role in taking corrective action where necessary.

The CWI Chair and the Workforce Development Board Directors have previously advocated for small oversight entities in order to have more effective partnership engagement. Working ad hoc groups have been a proven successful alternative to large boards.

Establish an accountability system that focuses on transparency and outcomes across programs:

- Fully implement the common measures for performance across multiple programs whose goal is to put people to work.
- Outcomes measured should recognize that the goal is to get people to work, to retain employment and to improve their earnings while working.
- In order to recognize participant characteristics and economic conditions that inhibit enrollment of individuals with multi-barriers for training/employment success, adopt a regression model for WIA performance outcome measures.

The CWI approved the State waiver for common performance measures which has been implemented for the program year 2009-2010 as well as a coordinated system at the State level. Also, the CWI recommended to the Governor the consolidation of 10 of the 17 required partner programs with consistent performance measures and reporting criteria.