

WIOA Primer for Boards

◆ Passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is a watershed moment in the development of the Workforce system:

WIOA is an important catalyst for change that encourages a wide range of stakeholders to collaborate more effectively both within and in partnership with Workforce Boards. WIOA seeks to streamline and strengthen the strategic roles of Workforce Development Boards by making state and local boards more agile and well-positioned to meet state, regional and local employers' workforce needs. State and local boards must coordinate and align workforce programs to provide coordinated, complementary, and consistent services to job seekers and employers. Under WIOA, business continues to contribute to strategic development and other activities by maintaining a leadership role on the boards and forming the majority of workforce board membership. The streamlining of board membership will make it possible for Boards to be more agile and flexible; however, the Act does specify 13 functions for Local workforce boards, and 12 functions for State workforce boards. (For more information - link to the WIOA Governance Fact Sheet, <http://1.usa.gov/1Pk9cqs>)

WIOA drives a vision for more strategic action by Workforce Boards, with particular focus on a unified vision for workforce development shared by all levels of Boards within a state, more extensive collaboration with partners and employers, and expanded accountability and transparency. In the realm of strategic activities, Boards will want to consider items such as:

- the impact of common performance measures,
- new employer measures,
- career pathways for adult and youth populations,
- sector strategies,
- the re-envisioning of American Job Centers (AJC),
- staff capacity building,
- One Stop / AJC procurement, cost sharing, and certification, along with many other issues.

This brief seeks to examine some of the most critical topics for Boards to consider in framing its new role, along with providing links to promising practices, with the additional goal of outlining the key themes of WIOA and areas of focus within the Strategic Boards Tool Kit.

“WIOA makes it easier for the public workforce system to help workers acquire the skills employers need and help employers access the talent pool they need to compete and win in a global economy. The new legislative provisions are designed to help workers, including those with barriers to employment, access employment, education, job-driven training and support services; enhance program coordination, streamline service delivery and increase flexibility for governance; improve services to employers; and align programs across common goals and increase accountability and transparency. WIOA provisions also emphasize quality training that leads to credentials, regional planning and service coordination and implementation of targeted sector-based strategies and career pathways.” - <http://bit.ly/1UqDHfW>

Strategic vs. Tactical Boards

In part because there was an emphasis on compliance as WIA was implemented, many state boards focused on ensuring that local workforce development areas met minimum standards. This alone represented a great deal of work. The role of a local Board under WIA was mainly to develop implementation plans and set funding priorities for their individual workforce area. WIOA challenges Workforce Boards to think more strategically and regionally about necessary policy changes and places tactical, operational planning more within the purview of program and agency managers. In addition to tactically asking how workforce development will be accomplished, with a focus on current conditions, real time analytics, and managing processes, the Board should also ask the strategic questions of why, and what, in connecting activities to the Workforce Development Vision and Mission statements, and focusing on emerging trends and patterns. (See “What is a Strategic Board” and “How to Lead a Strategic Meeting” presentation materials in the Strategic Boards Tool Kit)

Vision and Mission

Board members are expected to develop a vision for their workforce system that is market-responsive, facilitates public-private partnerships, and serves as the **strategic** connection point for elected officials, workforce development providers, educators, employers, and stakeholders. That vision should be developed to incorporate successful workforce strategies such as sectors and career pathways that advance opportunities for all workers and job seekers. Boards also serve as a forum to develop a collective Vision and Mission that generates buy-in from all key stakeholders across

institutions, including the employer community, at the local, regional, and state levels. (Link to WIOA <https://www.doleta.gov/wioa/>, Quick Start Action Planner http://www.workforcegps.org/QSAP_App, and the promising practice New Jersey Blueprint for Talent Development <http://bit.ly/21cpNCR>)

Nominating a WIOA Compliant Board

WIOA streamlines membership requirements for workforce boards, while maintaining a majority of business representation. Board membership must have a minimum of 51% of its members from the business sector, 20% representing existing workforce, and the remaining 19% representing service providers, including the required participation of Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Education, Registered Apprenticeship, with optional participation of educational institutions, economic and community development, and higher education. The National Association for State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) has developed a template to assist Boards in ensuring compliance, which can be found here: <http://bit.ly/1ZE25yJ>

Educating Board Members

As Workforce Boards shift to an even more strategic role under WIOA, it becomes increasingly critical that members understand the expectations for the positions they hold. Members are asked to serve as a critical lynchpin in ensuring that workforce training and investments are aligned with the needs of the state and local economy through the design, delivery, and oversight of the workforce development system. Boards may find it useful to develop a members' manual with information directly related to the changes between WIA and WIOA for existing members, and a comprehensive manual for new members. (Link to promising practice, Texas Workforce Solutions New Board Member Guide, <http://bit.ly/28pXFBL>)

Working with Local Elected Officials

Under WIOA, it is expected that local workforce plans will support both economic growth and labor force needs; Boards and Elected Officials are encouraged to develop a more streamlined, strategic,

and comprehensive, system, which complements both Regional and State Plan Strategies. WIOA also provides an opportunity, but not a requirement, for local elected officials to restructure local workforce boards. This is a critically important opportunity that could facilitate the development of a strong, cooperative, working relationship between the Workforce Boards and Local Elected Officials, particularly as regional and local plans are aligned. (For more information, link to the Quick Start Action Planner <http://bit.ly/21csc0j>)

One Stop Certification and Competitive Bidding

WIOA requires the certification and continuous improvement of one-stop centers by Workforce Boards and elected officials. It is the responsibility of the State and Local Boards to assist in developing the criteria and metrics by which the function of the one-stop centers will be measured. While some areas of the country already participated in competitive bidding for One Stop services, for many the introduction of this requirement under WIOA has stimulated the need for the development of guidance related to the procurement process for local areas to begin competitive bidding. (For more information, link to One Stop Fact Sheet, <http://1.usa.gov/1QUJA8d>)

Sector Strategies

Sector strategies are regional, industry-focused approaches to building skilled workforces and are among the most effective ways to align public and private resources to address the talent needs of employers. While the approach is not new, there is a growing body of evidence showing that sector strategies can simultaneously improve employment opportunities for job seekers and the competitiveness of industries. As such, a number of national initiatives and federal laws are driving workforce organizations, and Workforce Boards in particular, to embrace these approaches, to meet both the needs of workers and the needs of the economy.

At the heart of sector strategies are sector partnerships (sometimes referred to as industry partnerships, workforce collaboratives or regional skills alliances, among others). These partnerships are led by businesses—within a critical industry cluster—working collaboratively with workforce areas, education and training, economic development, labor, and community organizations to identify and solve pressing human resource and other challenges. Boards may often act as an intermediary or convener for these efforts. Sector partnerships are the vehicle through which businesses voice their

talent needs and regional partners collaborate to develop customized solutions to meet those business needs.

For more information, link to the WorkforceGPS Business Engagement Collaborative Sectors Resources <http://bit.ly/1WYyvG2>)

Identifying Industry Need

Experience tells us that a Board looking to build a demand driven solution must begin with the best labor market information available. Often, the best information is the data compiled and reported through the State's Employment Security Administration (SESA). States should offer assistance to Boards through a labor market analyst producing reports on the local and/or regional labor markets, perhaps even delineated by industry sector to assist with the identification of industry workforce needs. However, even the best quantitative information has its limitations and challenges. It is also critical that the local Workforce System have access to qualitative data, gathered through direct communication with private sector employers, in order to assess current and future demand for skills and talent. (For more information, link to the WorkforceGPS Business Engagement Collaborative Sectors Resources, briefs on Understanding Supply and Understanding Demand <http://bit.ly/1WYyvG2>)

Employer Engagement

The Board will need to establish criteria that identifies training investment opportunities in industries and occupations that appear to offer the greatest opportunity for alignment with industry demand, and ultimately, the greatest opportunity for workers to gain the skills or credentials they need to be competitive in the job market. Labor Market Information can lead the way in identifying likely candidates, but this information must be verified by qualitative information. The best way to validate this information is through direct connection with industry employers. To effectively engage employers in Workforce efforts, it is critical that there is a clear Return On Investment (ROI) for their participation in the process. A recent report from the US Chamber of Commerce underscores the importance to employers of participating in workforce development processes. (For more information, link to US Chamber report <http://bit.ly/1ReqkPQ>, and Industry Champions brief on WorkforceGPS Business Engagement Collaborative <http://bit.ly/1WYyvG2>)

Partnerships with Stakeholders

Under WIOA, the development of effective partnerships with workforce development stakeholders becomes increasingly important as Boards have included partnership goals into their Unified or Combined State Plans. Many Boards have already established relationships with partners; however, the development of a unified vision for workforce development at the state, regional, and local levels which has buy in from all partners, can be challenging. Some states have done this well, and provide some opportunities for replication. (For more information, link to Partnerships QSAP

<http://bit.ly/1UqG3eS>, as well as the National Fund for Workforce Solutions Partnership Guidance Tool, <http://bit.ly/1RZblHJ>, and the National Governor's Association Workgroup Plan for Building Partnerships to Get Results, <http://bit.ly/1UarOxi>)

Career Pathways

Throughout WIOA, there is a clear emphasis on the development of Career Pathways, for which all programs will utilize the same agreed-upon, detailed career pathways in order to better serve their respective populations. Although the state Board is not directly responsible for developing the pathways themselves, it may want to consider brokering and adopting a statewide career pathways definition. The state Board may also want to identify and/or select a career pathways framework for development and implementation, and a set of priorities for the implementation of the framework.

(For more information, link to Colorado Promising practice, <http://1.usa.gov/1PPaoHN>, CLASP's Opportunities for Action Career Pathways and the ETPL <http://bit.ly/1Uas8w1>, Career Pathways Tool Kit <http://1.usa.gov/1syD7qa>)

Youth

WIOA removes the requirement for a state or local area Youth Council; however, state Boards should consider developing system wide requirement for the planning and oversight of local youth programming which includes the establishment of Youth Standing Committees. As the majority of funding shifts from a focus on in school youth to the more problematic cohort of out of school youth, it will be critical that both the state and local Boards provide oversight and alignment with the new youth related priorities under WIOA. (For more information, link to the Youth Fact Sheet, <http://1.usa.gov/1TZttnb>, Youth Council Tool Kit, <http://bit.ly/1UatQNW>)

Performance Measures

WIOA establishes a new requirement for common measures across all titles of the Act. Boards should consider the review and adoption of a policy for a data integration plan to ensure performance accountability and data integrity. Also worthy of consideration is a policy for an annual review of primary indicator targets to ensure system accountability, as well as a policy to review the outcomes of Eligible Training Providers (ETP) along with the adoption or revision of standards governing the ETP list. (For more information, check the WIOA site for Performance related updates at <https://www.doleta.gov/wioa/>)



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