

*PA Association of
Workforce
Investment
Boards*

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PA Association of
Workforce Investment
Boards
and
PA Partners

Policy Recommendations
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Local Workforce Investment Boards

Workforce Investment Boards are local entities that operate in regional networks to implement the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. The main role of a Workforce Investment Board is to plan and oversee federal, state and local funding to workforce development programs in local communities. Boards are also responsible for connecting with economic development entities, bringing economic data into community planning efforts around workforce, and assuring that the local workforce system is closely connected to the private sector. They oversee the one-stop career centers, called PA CareerLinks® in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania's public workforce system includes 23 local workforce investment areas that are led by 22 local Workforce Investment Boards.

Local, business-led Workforce Investment Boards are demand-driven, innovative and responsible for the development of policy and programs under the Workforce Investment Act programs and related legislation. The Boards are the objective, neutral and independent conveners of local economic development organizations, higher education institutions, private employers, industry partnerships and other civic organizations. They operate with the dual end purpose of ensuring that local employers are competitive in the global marketplace because they have a skilled workforce and that residents of local areas have access to career paths that lead to family-sustaining jobs.

Recommendations

- Leadership of the Boards must remain in the hands of private-sector members, and their voices should guide the decisions that are made locally.
- Local elected officials and Boards should be provided with maximum flexibility to jointly determine the roles, responsibilities and accountability for each as well as maintain local governance over:
 - * Selection of Board members
 - * Strategic and operational planning
 - * Structure of service delivery systems and selection of service providers
 - * Budget and priorities

- The setting of priorities for public-sector investments in workforce should continue to be vested in the Workforce Investment Boards. This authority should be limited to providing the planning, oversight and development of resources, while organizations that implement programs as contractors of the Boards should continue to be responsible for carrying out everyday operations, preferably in joint enterprises as part of the one-stop system.

One-Stop Centers

The Workforce Investment Act consolidated programs that have a like mission and vision in providing for a skilled and prepared workforce into one-stop centers, called PA CareerLinks® in Pennsylvania. One-stops serve as an expanded labor exchange between job seekers and employers where job seekers can get employment information, find out about career development training opportunities and connect to various programs in their area, and employers can access a qualified workforce along with resources to assist the incumbent workforce. This integration of services has made the availability and location of workforce services easier for the public to find, access and utilize.

Recommendations

- Local Workforce Investment Boards must continue to provide policy guidance and fiscal and program oversight to the one-stop centers.
- Wagner-Peyser-funded employment services must be fully integrated with WIA-funded services in the one-stop centers with all staff within the one-stop functionally supervised by one-stop administrators.
- The sequence of services or movement between core, intensive and training services should be eliminated. Efforts instead should focus on what services individuals need, based on assessments by trained staff, when they arrive at the one-stop centers.

Education and Training

All current and new workers should be lifelong learners to cope with the increasing skill demands of business and industry. In the more than 10 years since the passage of the Workforce Investment Act, practitioners at the federal, state and local levels have sought to

better serve individuals and employers. Certain practices stand out as lessons learned from these efforts.

Recommendations

- Workforce development and education (K-12, higher education, career and technical education) must align to address the current and future needs of all employers.
- Greater development of career pathways should be encouraged with multiple entry and exit points as a strategy for building a workforce customized to the future local needs of the 21st Century economy.
- The use of Individual Training Accounts should be continued, but the use of contracts with training vendors for group training should be permitted to increase access to programs for larger groups of individuals, especially dislocated workers.
- Options for employer-based training such as on-the-job training and customized training should be encouraged.

Postsecondary and Adult Education

Without a world-class education system, the supply of new employees with the knowledge and skills essential to keep pace with the technology that is driving innovation and the re-invention of Pennsylvania business will be hard to find.

Recommendations

- Opportunities for a four-year college degree should be available in the career path of workers, but pursuing it immediately after high school may not be right for every learner.
- Training should move more workers toward the equivalent of a two-year postsecondary education (vocational degree, industry certification or associate's degree) following completion of a high school diploma.

- Regional occupational priorities established by Workforce Investment Boards should give direction to educational institutions that are interested in providing education and training for customers of the workforce development system. Federal and state policy should require postsecondary institutions to consult with local Workforce Investment Boards on strategic planning and the creation of workforce programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials.
- State higher education policy must continue to support articulation agreements between institutions and the smooth transfer of a student's credits and courses from one institution to the other.

Industry Partnerships

Pennsylvania has successfully implemented industry partnerships and sector strategies to identify and successfully address common workforce development issues among the key industries in regional economies. Industry Partnerships help identify skilled workforce needs within the targeted industry or sector and develop training and educational strategies to put people into career paths that lead to the jobs which the industry needs.

Recommendations

- The Industry Partnership approach has improved the delivery of employer-based training by increasing the focus on strategic workforce planning. Both state and federal funding sources should continue to support this approach, requiring partnerships to work with local Workforce Investment Boards in the establishment and maintenance of workforce development plans.
- The workforce system should provide more resources to encourage incumbent worker training and opportunities to advance the skills of the existing workforce.
- A statutory program should be created with designated funding and distinct outcome measures to support the unique capacity for Industry Partnerships, helping local industries plan, grow, innovate and re-tool their workforces for the future.

- Industry Partnerships should use the appropriate mix of state funding and WIA on-the-job-training, customized training, subsidized training and other resources to cohesively advance the skills of both their incumbent and emerging workforce.

Funding

The level of funding for workforce programs has significantly declined since the passage of the Workforce Investment Act in 1998. Adequate and dependable financial resources are fundamentally important given the workforce challenges facing our country and the need to re-train so many citizens. The financial burden of maintaining the nation's one-stop system currently falls almost entirely on the WIA Title I and Employment Services (Wagner-Peyser Act) funding streams.

Recommendations

- The strategic planning of local Workforce Investment Boards should continue to be used as a guideline for the distribution of all workforce funds from both federal and state entities, including Perkins, Adult Basic Education, WIA Title II, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Pennsylvania programs such as Customized Job Training, WEDnetPA, competitive workforce grants and others.
- Maximum flexibility should be allowed to reallocate funds among WIA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth funding streams.
- The current formula flow of funds from the federal to state and local levels should be maintained, including the percentage allotments to states and allocations to local areas.
- A separate funding stream should be established specifically for one-stop operations, infrastructure and partner cost-sharing.
- Through incentives, state agencies governing and supporting the local workforce and economic development system should reward actions and relationships that result in greater cooperation and coordination among programs and geographical areas.

- Federal and state policy should maintain the current definitions of administrative costs in WIA and oppose efforts to broaden the scope of activities that must be charged to administration; furthermore, liberal carryover funds from program year to program year should be allowed for program continuity.

Youth

Young people are a significant part of our emerging workforce. Their skills, aptitudes and preparation levels will determine Pennsylvania's ability to compete in an increasingly global marketplace.

Recommendations

- Eligibility criteria should be based on skill deficits and other barriers, not family income, to ensure that youth have access to the employment services available through funding provided by the local workforce system.
- The maximum eligibility age for youth should be increased to 24.
- Services for both in-school and out-of-school youth should be retained, and local areas should be given the flexibility to allocate funds to both as determined by local needs.
- Stand-alone Summer Youth Employment Programs, such as those carried out under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, should be continued and enhanced.
- State policy should provide Pennsylvania youth without secondary credentials access to quality educational options that may lead to a GED or diploma and postsecondary and/or industry credentials preparing them for a self-sustaining wage occupation.

Governance

Governance is a major policy question for the public workforce system and will be an issue for the new Administration in Harrisburg as well as for the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act. Decisions on governance provide a framework for defining the roles and responsibilities of the key actors in the system.

Recommendations

- The responsibility for overall workforce system integrity, efficiency and effectiveness is vested with state government and should be centralized in a highly visible state office.
- The Governor should charge all state agencies to strive for greater efficiency and to remove the barriers to interagency cooperation so they can better coordinate their collective funding policies for local and regional workforce, economic development and higher education agencies.
- Devolving decisions on state agency operations to the local level would promote more effective operation of one-stops. For this to occur, the Governor and his immediate staff responsible for workforce issues must set consistent policies across state agencies to meet this goal and enforce their implementation.
- Pennsylvania should move to a multi-year budget process in order to ensure continuity in workforce planning and implementation of programs. Federal allocations of workforce development funds intended for formula distribution to local or regional areas should be separated from the budgeting process for State appropriations.
- Meaningful collaboration between federal agencies should support and help to streamline workforce, education and economic development programs at the state and local levels. Congress and the Administration should direct federal agencies to develop a joint initiative to align federal programs, oversight and regulations.

Performance Measures

Accountability and data are critical components of the workforce development system. Real-time information on the status of the system is required in order to ensure continuous improvement and success. This might include research to establish short and/or intermediate time frame measures that are reliable “proxies” for longer-term results.

Recommendation

- There should be more flexibility for the adjustment of performance measures based on economic conditions or demographics. Longitudinal regression models have proved useful in the past.