

Providing Business Services

A “HOW TO” MANUAL

WINS 
Workforce Innovation Networks

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Taking Care of Business:

A Series of How To Manuals on Creating and Sustaining Employer-based Workforce Development Intermediaries

As WINs worked with selected employer-based intermediaries, the partner organizations captured exemplary practices, lessons learned, and “how to” approaches of those that successfully fulfilled this role. Presented here and in related publications are these experiences in the form of four manuals. Each explains in detail how to replicate a successful intermediary strategy and tailor it to your needs. These manuals are designed for workforce professionals and employer intermediaries that wish to use the public workforce system to address the dual demands of employers and job seekers. The WINs partners present these manuals as tools to help solve our nation’s most pressing workforce challenges.

The manuals cover four topics:

Creating Community Advancement Intermediaries: Implementing a model that enables employers to move entry-level, low-skilled workers up career ladders, at the same time creating vacancies for new workers entering the job market.

Partnering with One-Stop Career Centers: Advice for businesses on collaborating with One-Stop Career Centers in strong public-private partnerships to train both incumbent workers and new entrants to the labor force.

Providing Business Services: Positioning employer intermediaries to provide business services through the local workforce system—and using this new position as a tool to grow both association membership and the number of employers who use and benefit from that system.

Building Employer-Responsive Workforce Systems at the State Level: State-level employer intermediaries organize and facilitate task forces of key stakeholders to make state workforce systems more effective and responsive to employer needs and to better align state economic and workforce development policies and programs.

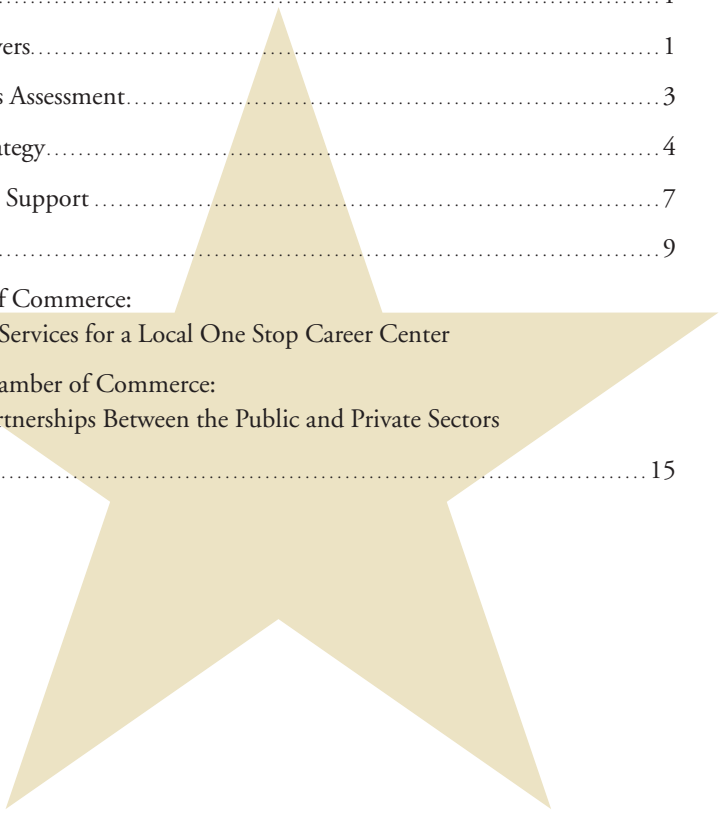
In addition, WINs has prepared a guide, *Organizing and Supporting the Employer Role in Workforce Development*, that has two purposes. One is to help employer organizations to understand why it is important to better organize and support the employer side of the employment equation and to engage employers more effectively in workforce development. The second is to show the leaders of employer and employer-serving organizations why and how they should become “workforce development intermediaries.”

These manuals and *The Guide* may be especially useful to organizations involved in the U.S. Department of Labor’s WIRED Initiative. The WIRED Initiative focuses on labor market areas that comprise multiple jurisdictions within states or across state borders. It supports innovative approaches to education and workforce and economic development that prepare workers to succeed in a globalizing economy. Through the WIRED initiative, governors have a unique opportunity to design and implement strategic approaches to regional economic development and job growth. These manuals provide critical lessons from WINs’ on-the-ground experience.

These manuals and the guide will help you understand what to do and how to create and sustain employer-based workforce development intermediaries. The state and local Workforce Investment Boards and employer intermediaries described in these manuals did it, and so can you!

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Providing Business Services

Introduction

This is a how-to guide for chambers of commerce and other employer organizations. It shows, step by step, how, in partnership with local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) and One-Stop Career Centers, they can provide their members with services that support business growth and economic stability. It shows how employer organizations can work hand in hand with the public workforce development system to offer employer-focused, effective, and efficient business services, addressing the core needs of business: hiring, training, and retaining workers.

Business-driven workforce services start with job placement, but many employer organizations go further based on their regions' business climates. These additional services can include facilitating training for incumbent workers, assisting in the development and implementation of effective human resources practices (e.g., job descriptions, personnel policies, interviewing), and providing access to hiring-related tax credits, seminars on human resources topics, and referrals for training and worker compensation. These services help to strengthen the public workforce system by emphasizing direct job placement and training services for incumbent workers. Employer organizations, with strong relationships to local businesses, are well positioned to offer workforce-related business services like these. And the potential for impact is significant: the Workforce Investment Act allocates billions of dollars each year for serving job seekers and employers. These funds are disbursed mainly through local Workforce Investment Boards, which have a majority of business members.

Step 1: Listen to Employers

As employer organizations know, business owners are not shy about stating what they need. In cities across the nation, finding and keeping reliable, skilled workers usually tops that list. By uncovering priority workforce issues, an employer organization can determine not only what is needed but how large its scope of work will be in partnering with the public workforce system.

An open forum for discussion with 10 to 20 business representatives is a good place to start. Other options may include the development of a survey of the organization's members to garner business needs, a review of existing surveys, or a "gap analysis," all of which

make it possible to determine the skill needs of employers, the skills of the labor pool, and the gap that exists between the two. Some important topics for discussion are:

- *Knowledge of the public workforce system:* Are employers aware of it? Do they use it?
- *Long- and short-term workforce needs:* How can employers reduce turnover, find workers with technical skills, replace expertise of retiring employees, and develop career ladders?
- *Methods of recruiting employees:* Do they use the Internet? Rely on word of mouth?
- *Strategies for training employees:* Is training on-the-job, conducted with in-house seminars, offered at community colleges?
- *Projected job openings in the next 12 months:* How many job openings are projected for entry-level workers? For skilled/professional staff? For supervisors and managers?
- *Other:* Are there dedicated resources to hire, enough time to recruit, any constraints with location or space that may detract from interviewing and hiring?

BROOKLYN MEETS A NEED:

Collecting Perceptions of the Public Workforce Development System

The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce developed a workforce survey for its members to gain a better understanding of the local labor market and current business trends. The goal was to find out how employers perceived the public workforce system to determine if there was a need for the chamber to become more engaged with it.

Employers were asked if they were Extremely Familiar, Somewhat Familiar, Somewhat Unfamiliar, or Extremely Unfamiliar with:

- The New York State Department of Labor Employment Services;
- Their local One-Stop Career Center or Workforce One Center;
- Their local Workforce Investment Board; and
- Community-based employment and training organizations.

Many of the employers were somewhat to extremely unfamiliar with the public system, which led the chamber to work closely with the One-Stop Center on how to better provide and market business services to the community.

While it may seem redundant, it is crucial to ask: if an employer organization works with the public system to offer these services, what is the likelihood its business members will take advantage of them? This will reinforce the idea that the employer organization needs business commitment to move forward. And it will provide a measure of how many businesses would use services, if they were being provided by the employer organization. Based on these discussions, it is not difficult to determine if there is an unmet need within an organization's constituency.

Step 2: Conduct a Needs Assessment

There are many ways in which an employer organization can collaborate with the public system. If many workforce needs are going unfulfilled, then there is an opportunity for the organization to get involved and help create a successful workforce system.

From an employer's point of view, successful workforce systems are:

- *Market-driven*, shaped by business needs;
- *Accountable*, based on clear, measurable indicators of success;
- *Customer-focused*, committed to customer satisfaction;
- *Flexible*, designed for continuous improvement; and
- *Skill-based*, based on skill needs developed with industry-recognized standards and certifications.

If these characteristics are not a part of the system, there is an opportunity for an employer organization to make a significant impact to improve workforce development for regional businesses.

TULSA MEETS A NEED:

Creating a Single Point of Contact

When the Tulsa Metro Chamber asked Tulsa businesses how the local workforce development system could better meet their needs, the response was overwhelming. The most important thing area employers wanted was a central place where they could make one contact to address their hiring and training needs.

The chamber took the initiative to work with Workforce Tulsa (the local WIB) to establish a single point of contact system. That system allows comprehensive, unparalleled access to a variety of human resources and training services through a single Web site and telephone number for area residents.

The local Workforce Investment Board must look to employer organizations for employer engagement, just as they look to labor unions for union engagement, or to universities and school districts for their involvement in the system. Employer organizations, likewise, must understand that they are organizing their employer members for the purpose of interacting with the publicly funded system—the primary motivation being to ensure that the publicly funded system allocates resources in ways that serve the needs of the employer community.

Employer organizations should recognize that interactive partnerships with their local WIBs—as well as with One-Stop Career Centers, which actually deliver or provide access to the services overseen by the WIBs—are of value to their members, both individually and collectively if any strategic partnership is going to be sustainable.

Workforce development programs don't just happen; they evolve, so start small and think big. Short-term plans that identify the most immediate needs are the best starting point, yet leave room to expand program services in the future. Needs are continuously changing—be aware of such things as shifts in labor demographics and shifts in the business climate.

Step 3: Implement a Strategy

Employer organizations can undertake two key strategies in partnerships with the public workforce system: promoting awareness and providing leadership; and participating as part of the system.

Promote Awareness and Provide Leadership

Help members, particularly small companies with few resources, understand the value of establishing practices and systems to support learning and performance improvement.

- Hold seminars, provide examples of promising practices, and suggest specific programs to help employers share knowledge and information that support both businesses and employees.
- Convene industry clusters or business networks that provide opportunities for ongoing discussion, benchmarking, and information.
- Be proactive and address the needs of the community before they take shape. As new economic development projects appear on the local radar, begin planning a role for the employer organization's team.

HOLYOKE MEETS A NEED:

Responding to New Trends

Holyoke, Massachusetts, was beginning to experience a decline in manufacturing, population loss, and a shift towards a new economy. The Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce responded to this triple threat to the local economy by establishing the Holyoke Employment Partnership. This group of employers, human service agencies, educational institutions, and public-sector representatives has worked to initiate, strengthen, and coordinate workforce development efforts in the community.

Make the Workforce Investment Boards in your community and/or region responsive to the needs of employers and their organizations.

- Nominate and support WIB board members.
- Participate on the WIB and its committees.
- Establish mechanisms for ongoing communication between employers and the WIB.

SOUTH CAROLINA MEETS A NEED:

Advocating for Change

The South Carolina Chamber sought to create a more accessible, employer-driven, and advancement-focused state workforce system. The chamber assembled and managed a task force of approximately 20 high-profile representatives from the public and private sectors, including senior executives from a cross-section of high-growth industries and businesses, ranging from *Fortune* 500 companies to smaller firms, as well as senior leaders from several of the state's largest agencies and representatives of the state's technical colleges. The team developed and submitted to the governor a plan for systemic policy and administrative change. This led to shifting administration of the Workforce Investment Act from the South Carolina Department of Labor to the Department of Commerce, better aligning employment with in-demand jobs.

Assist small and mid-sized companies to acquire human resources functions they lack.

- Provide information on standard procedures.
- Hire an entrepreneurial staff person with a business background rather than a nonprofit or social service background. People with this mindset see the business for what it actually is—the client.

CONNECTICUT MEETS A NEED:

Making One-Stop Centers Employer Responsive

The Connecticut Business and Industry Association placed two full-time staff members in the Hartford One-Stop Career Center to improve the connections of employers with the public workforce development system. These staff members introduce employers to One-Stop Center offerings, encourage employers to submit their employment needs to the center, and bring employers to the One-Stop Center to identify worker competencies and skills.

Connect your members to financial and training resources.

- Identify financial resources for workforce development, which might include federal and state grants, loans and tax credits, or in-kind training.
- Target specific industry sectors that are projected to grow.
- Identify businesses that would not otherwise qualify for state skills grants.

BROOKLYN MEETS A NEED:

Introducing the HR Specialist

The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce created a Human Resources Specialist position, designed to build awareness of the local One-StopCenter's resources. The HR Specialist spends time in the field, working directly with businesses to identify the services they need most. A key emphasis is helping businesses take advantage of the state and city's incumbent worker training funds—grants that support training for existing workers to develop specific skills needed by local businesses. Until the Brooklyn chamber became involved, almost all grants went to businesses in upstate New York and in Manhattan.

Participate as Part of the System

Provide public and private human resources services through the One-Stop Career Center.

A number of employer organizations or their nonprofit affiliates have developed effective workforce development programs that have received public funds (e.g., school-to-work, welfare-to-work). Employer organizations can subcontract with a WIB to provide business services at the One-Stop Center.

EL PASO MEETS A NEED:

Operating the One-Stop Center

In Texas, the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce received a one-year contract to operate the Upper Rio Grande @ Work Business Services Unit (the local One-Stop Center). This unit is responsible for providing services to employers at low or no cost. Some of the services the chamber is responsible for conducting at the One-Stop Center include: assessing business needs; writing job descriptions; processing job placement orders; recruiting and screening applicants; interviewing job candidates; conducting reference checks, credit checks, and background checks; providing access and delivery of industry-recognized training for incumbent workers; helping with downsizing and rapid response (layoff reorganization); connecting with postsecondary institutions, federal and state tax incentives, labor marketing information, and eligible training provider lists and programs; and measuring results, including customer satisfaction.

Market the business services of your local One-Stop Center.

- Develop and implement an integrated marketing plan to generate awareness of the services provided by One-Stop Career Centers to employers.
- Create business-friendly materials for the One-Stop Career Center, which may include a pamphlet, a grand opening event, or radio, billboard, and print ads.
- Assist in designing and developing an annual report containing employer testimonials, which can be used to generate employer awareness and use of the One-Stop Center.

CINCINNATI MEETS A NEED:

Raising Awareness

As in many communities, employers in the Cincinnati region were unaware of the human resources services provided by the public workforce system. With over 6,000 members (covering 15 counties in southwest Ohio, northern Kentucky, and southeast Indiana), the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber spearheaded a valuable partnership to bridge that gap. The chamber worked with the Southwest Ohio Region Workforce Investment Board to identify the objectives, strategies, and tactics that would effectively market the WIB's Super Jobs Center to employers. The chamber developed campaign materials to attract over 100 businesses and education and labor organizations to attend the center's grand opening.

Collaborate with the public sector to provide a seamless transition between the employer organization's workforce initiatives and the public sector.

- Co-locate a staff member of the local WIB or One-Stop Center inside the employer organization's headquarters, so that the public workforce system stays in touch with the latest needs and demands of the business community.
- Create a single-point-of-contact system among all of the training providers, making it easier for employers to connect to training and other HR services.

ARLINGTON, TEXAS, MEETS A NEED:

Centralizing Services

An important outgrowth of the Arlington, Texas, Chamber-WIB partnership was the development of the Center for Continuing Education and Workforce Development. The center, a collaborative partnership, houses 15 workforce service providers, including the office of the Arlington Chamber's Workforce Development staff. All 15 now operate as a single unit focused on meeting the needs of employers, employees, and job seekers.

Step 4: Obtain Financial Support

When designing a financial model to support programs to provide business services, employer organizations should avoid relying on any one funding stream. Just like setting up a personal financial portfolio, diversified funding is key to long-term sustainable programs. It isn't easy to achieve quickly, but long-term and varied programmatic financing can make the difference between a program that sinks and one that swims.

Many employer organizations shy away from providing business services directly because they lack funding or fear getting committed to sustainable fundraising. Most will see funding as their number one obstacle to implementing a program. When looking at designing a model, it is important to consider funding a top priority. Many employer organizations

have established nonprofit affiliates that are eligible to apply for and receive public, foundation, and private-sector funds.

There are a number of opportunities for raising money to either implement or expand an existing program:

- *Federal and state funding:* In most areas, the local WIB will issue a competitive Request for Proposal when there is a need for an organization to provide workforce services for the local One-Stop Career Center. RFPs can be overwhelming to an employer organization that is not used to looking at these types of documents. Each document includes a background about the group issuing the request, an overview of its request for services (including basic requirements of who can apply for the grants), and a general scope of work, which provides background on what service provision the grant will cover.
- *Private foundations:* Foundations have dedicated funding and specific programmatic priorities. Employer organizations can research who has funded similar programs in the past, and for what amounts. It is extremely important to do this research when looking into private foundations: most have constraints on geography, scope of work, and the type of organizations they will fund.
- *Fee for service:* Some employer organizations set their programs up and serve businesses the good old-fashioned way: clients pay for services. Fee for service relies heavily on marketing, and it can take a long time to generate enough of a program's expenses to make this a worthwhile component of a diversified funding strategy. Most organizations must take into consideration if they can sustain the program with internal resources until the program turns a profit.
- *Business support:* Larger members of an employer organization may invest in strengthening the workforce system to grow a pipeline of skilled workers. These investments not only benefit the large company but smaller-sized employers and the entire region's economy as well.

Be Creative

Gone are the days when one workforce agency can do it all; nor can the public workforce system operate in a social service mode any longer. It takes creative models to connect people with jobs, and employer organizations are in the best position to become valued partners in the public system. While most see the end result of job placement as just that, there are two customers that need to be served within the system: job seekers and businesses. Without both, the equation can never balance.

Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce:

Developing Business Services for a Local One-Stop Career Center

Staff at the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce are the self-proclaimed “HR department for Brooklyn’s small businesses.” It started in 1998 with Good Help, the chamber’s free recruitment, screening, and placement service. Since then, the chamber has become a breeding ground for best practices—securing incumbent worker training grants for local businesses, conducting much-needed labor market research, and acting as the business services arm for the Brooklyn Workforce 1 Career Center (the local One-Stop Career Center).

When the New York City Department of Small Business Services sought to contract out the management of business services, the Brooklyn Chamber was an obvious and natural fit. The chamber won the \$1.2 million grant to run the Business Solutions Center in the Brooklyn Workforce 1 Career Center. Good Help was immediately relocated to the Business Solutions Center, and the chamber expanded its small business product offerings to include training services, small business loans, micro-loans, and counseling on tax credits.

Determining the Need

The Brooklyn chamber’s staffing service grew out of the concerns of a single member, a travel agency, that had expressed challenges over its access to reliable, skilled workers. After conducting a needs assessment survey of its members, the chamber realized that the problem wasn’t an isolated one. It decided to embark on an effort to provide basic human resources services.

Leveraging Individual Strengths for Partnerships

The chamber created a formal network of nonprofit and public placement services and training providers that teach employability and technical skills to adult workers. The match made sense: while the nonprofits had access to job seekers and job training capacities, the chamber had access to employers and an understanding of what specific skills were in demand in the local market.

Establishing a Nonprofit Affiliate to Secure Funding

To provide a wide range of staffing services to chamber members, Good Help and the chamber received \$100,000 in start-up funding from the Clark Foundation, Pfizer, Citigroup, and JPMorgan Chase.

It is unlikely that the chamber could have secured this diverse start-up funding had it not already established a nonprofit organization eligible to secure grants from federal, state, and local governments, private foundations, and corporate sponsors. The chamber's Brooklyn Alliance, its nonprofit affiliate, can actively seek out these funding sources. The chamber also convinced the New York State Assembly to allocate funding to Good Help. Since FY 2000, the state has provided \$200,000 per year to maintain the program.

Enhance Member Services in Workforce Development

Thanks to the chamber's history in providing staffing services, and because of its strong proposal, the chamber won the \$1.2 million city grant. As a new broker of workforce services, the chamber identified ways to expand its member services. For example, it created a Human Resources Specialist position, designed to build awareness of the One-Stop Center's resources. The HR Specialist, the first of its kind in the borough, spends a significant amount of time in the field, working directly with targeted businesses to identify their need for hiring and training services.

A key area of emphasis is helping businesses take advantage of state and city funds for training incumbent workers. Until the Brooklyn Chamber became involved, the vast majority of these grants went to businesses upstate and in Manhattan.

To maximize funding opportunities, the chamber identified specific employers who would qualify for the skills grants. It targeted industry sectors that were projected to grow, businesses that would not otherwise expend training dollars, and entry-level jobs that could expand with increased skills. Once companies were identified, the HR Specialist called each company to explain the opportunity, then conducted a site visit to brief company leaders. A dozen businesses attended a follow-up workshop designed to help companies apply for the grants. In just a few months, the chamber helped to secure more than \$85,000 in training dollars for its members.

Arlington (Texas) Chamber of Commerce: Creating Strategic Partnerships Between the Public and Private Sectors

Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County (the local WIB) had access to resources that could make the workforce of Arlington, Texas—and therefore, its businesses—more competitive. The Arlington Chamber of Commerce garnered local business support to effectively shape Workforce Solutions’ strategic planning efforts in support of economic growth.

The first challenge was simply to get more local employers to use the public workforce system’s services so that the chamber could better understand how to enhance them. To engage more employers, the chamber acted as a liaison between their members and Workforce Solutions.

The two organizations developed a strategic partnership: the chamber would gather information on the workforce needs of its employer members to help make the WIB more responsive to the needs of area businesses. One outcome of the partnership was the implementation of a \$175,000 performance-based grant from Workforce Solutions to the chamber to serve businesses using *WorkInTexas* (a Web-based, job-matching service) and the local One-Stop Centers.

Following the Money

Wanting to determine its role in developing the local workforce, the chamber began by conducting comprehensive research identifying regional funding streams. The research revealed that some \$1 billion in public funds was being spent each year on programs to create, mold, and shape the local workforce. The chamber then surveyed its members to determine how they fulfill their human resources needs and what improvements could be made to the public workforce system to increase its utilization.

Through its research, the Arlington Chamber recognized that the public workforce system had funding for services that the chamber could efficiently deliver or broker as the lead agency. Business organizations provide a structured, organized framework for employer engagement and involvement. These services—accessing employers and creating employer-responsive products—would ultimately benefit chamber members by providing resources for employers to access the skilled talent necessary for business growth.

Internally, chamber staff began to gain approval and buy in for an enhanced role at each level of the organization—individual members, the executive committee, councils, and finally the board of directors. The chamber’s workforce services are now a direct member benefit.

Building Relationships, Leveraging Strengths

The chamber and Workforce Solutions recognize that their partnership is based on trust. They agree on the need to create a system that requires their staffs to work together to meet the goals of each partner. Moreover, there is an understanding that the partnership must flow down to secondary and tertiary levels of leadership at each organization to achieve and sustain long-term change.

Relationship building started at the top. The chamber representative held a face-to-face meeting with the CEO of Workforce Solutions. During the meeting, each side was candid about the type of partnership it wanted to have and clearly defined the potential benefits to the partnership.

Under the terms of the partnership agreement, Workforce Solutions provides all necessary information about the resources available through the public workforce system. Workforce Solutions also strengthened its participation in chamber activities by volunteering for chamber board and committee appointments. The chamber leverages its marketing channels (e.g., newsletters, Web site, media relations) and credibility to facilitate acceptance among employers.

Formalizing the Partnership

When the Arlington Chamber learned of the grant opportunity through Workforce Solutions, it realized that, as an employer organization, its credibility, contacts, and capacity would enable it to provide services better than any other organization could. The chamber also saw the opportunity to align the effort directly with its members' needs. The chamber competed for and received a \$175,000 grant from Workforce Solutions to continue and increase the chamber's outreach to businesses to help them use WorkInTexas.com. This grant has enabled the chamber to offer the resources of a streamlined workforce system to its employer members.

The chamber's contract with Workforce Solutions allowed it to hire a coordinator of employer services to manage the project from the outset. Additionally, the coordinator acts as a liaison between Workforce Solutions and the chamber's Workforce Development Council to ensure member needs are met. Chamber staff members understand the needs of members, and they regularly provide feedback to representatives from the public workforce system.

Setting Quantifiable Goals and Objectives

The agreement with Workforce Solutions lays out the specific number of employers that the chamber must contact through initial outreach, as well as a target number (600) to be registered with WorkInTexas.com. Additional activities include follow-up surveys, outreach and modifications to the system based on employer needs—all in place to show measurable outcomes of the partnership.

Following Up with Employers After Service Utilization

One-on-one follow-up ensures that the chamber stays up to date about the current business environment. It also offers the opportunity for continued communication to build awareness about services available and lets employers know that their interests and concerns are important to the chamber and reflected in modifications to the public workforce system.

Evaluating and Revising the System to Integrate the Changing Needs of Employers

Employer needs and resources change often. Chambers and workforce services providers must be willing to adapt their systems to meet these needs and remain relevant to employers. In Arlington, both the chamber and Workforce Solutions conduct year-end customer satisfaction surveys to identify areas of success and room for improvement.

WINs Resources

The following WINs resources are available on the Web sites of the WINs partners, along with many more resources on employer-responsive strategies for community advancement models, workforce intermediaries, building workforce pipelines, employer engagement, training strategies for non-traditional workers, and more.

- Center for Workforce Success at the National Association of Manufacturers:
www.nam.org/workforce
- Jobs for the Future: www.jff.org
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for a Competitive Workforce:
www.uschamber.com/icw

Career Ladders: A Guidebook for Workforce Intermediaries (Jobs for the Future 2003): Information and extensive resources on the role of workforce intermediaries in planning, developing, operating, and expanding career ladders. It summarizes lessons learned from innovative work across the country.

Employer-focused One-Stop Centers: Businesses Getting the Most for Their Investment (U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for a Competitive Workforce 2004): Hundreds of One-Stop Centers across the country are meeting and exceeding employers' workforce development needs. ICW has the names of the businesses and their stories to prove it. Search the Online Database at: www.uschamber.com/icw/.

Filling America's Jobs Series (Center for Workforce Success at the National Association of Manufacturers): A Series of How-To Guides. "Working with CEOs to Communicate the Importance of a Skilled Workforce in Sector Workforce Development"; "How Businesses Can Implement Sector Workforce Development Strategies for Jobs and Economic Growth"; "How Employer Associations Can Help Small Firms Be More Competitive by Improving the Productivity of Entry-level Workers"; "How to Increase Supervisory Impact on Retention"; "A Guide for Public Workforce Professionals"; "A Guide for Employers to Benefit from the Public Workforce System."

Finders, Keepers: Business Taking Action to Secure Skilled Workers (U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for a Competitive Workforce 2006): A series of best practices that share the successes of five chambers of commerce (four local and one state) that were supported by the WINs initiative to develop innovative pilot programs in workforce development.

Meeting the Workforce Needs of the Milwaukee Construction Industry: Case Study of the Center of Excellence (Jobs for the Future 2006): Profile of the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership's Center of Excellence, which addresses the boom in construction and a skills shortage in advanced manufacturing and, at the same time, connects low-wage workers to advancement opportunities in these industries.

The Role of the Workforce Intermediary CD-ROM (Center for Workforce Success at the National Association of Manufacturers): This CD-ROM describes the importance of regional collaboration—driven by the business community—to train the worker pipeline.

Surviving in a Dynamic Economy—How Chambers Can Help Navigate the Workforce Development System (U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for a Competitive Workforce 2004): How chambers are helping employers meet labor force needs in three geographically diverse communities that are facing challenges—a shrinking manufacturing base, the expansion of services in the health care industry, and demographic shifts in the workforce.

The 2005 Skills Gap Report: A Survey of the American Manufacturing Workforce (Center for Workforce Success at the National Association of Manufacturers 2006): The results of this survey provide a picture of the broadening gap in the availability of skilled workers and the employee performance requirements of 21st century manufacturing and what should be done to ensure a future U.S. manufacturing workforce.

Workforce Intermediaries and Their Roles in Promoting Advancement (Jobs for the Future 2004): The origins and elements of workforce intermediaries, their strategies for advancing workers to family-sustaining careers, and the challenge of securing financing to sustain intermediary services and expand them to a scale that makes a real difference to communities.

Locating a One-Stop Career Center: The America's Service Locator

www.servicelocator.org

For a variety of workforce needs, the most efficient first step for an employer is to contact a One-Stop Career Center. The One-Stop Centers provide assistance with recruitment and training. Prepare for a visit to the local One-Stop Center by determining as precisely as possible your employee needs. The America's Service Locator Web site lists One-Stop Centers by state, zip code, services, and more. One-Stop Centers can also be located by calling: 1.877.US2.JOBS or 1.877.889.5627 (TTY).

Also, learn more about the public workforce system by visiting www.doleta.gov/business and www.workforce3one.org.

Workforce Innovation Networks—WINs

WINs is a partnership of:

- The Center for Workforce Success, the nonprofit education and training arm of the National Association of Manufacturers' Manufacturing Institute;
- The Institute for a Competitive Workforce, a nonprofit affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; and
- Jobs for the Future, a Boston-based national nonprofit working on education and workforce development.

From 2003 to 2005, with the support of the Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, WINs honed the capacity of employer-based organizations to function as workforce development intermediaries that can play a new and important role on the employer side of the nation's workforce equation.

The Role of Employer-based Workforce Intermediaries

Employer associations and other similar employer-based organizations are uniquely suited to being workforce development intermediaries: they understand and aggregate employer workforce needs, speak employer language, and enjoy employer trust. Since 1997, the WINs partnership has identified and refined the core elements of the role of effective, employer-based workforce intermediaries. Such organizations:

Convene, organize, and support employers on workforce development matters, including aggregating and conveying employer needs to the federal job training system and other providers of workforce services;

Directly provide education and training to workers and job seekers or broker such services to them by linking them to the public workforce system's One-Stop Career Centers and other education and training providers;

Work with education and training providers to upgrade their offerings and make them more relevant to evolving employer needs (e.g., incorporate skill requirements, including formal skill standards; help design curricula; and work to certify programs and credential graduates);

Help govern the various elements of local workforce development systems (including but not limited to federally funded Workforce Investment Boards and One-Stop Career Centers, community colleges, and voc-tech centers at the secondary and postsecondary levels), and make them more employer oriented and effective in serving both employers and workers; and

Conduct research and development (e.g., research employer needs locally and experiment with new workforce development techniques and partnerships).