



## **A LOCAL PERSPECTIVE ON NATIONAL WORKFORCE POLICY FRAMEWORK**

**May 2012**

As Congress and the President consider the role of a National Workforce System and its implementation at the State and local levels, it is critical to create and promote stronger links between workforce development, education, and economic development. While employers struggle to fill some jobs with qualified workers, millions of unemployed Americans face increasing challenges to support themselves and their families. In the 2012 economy, jobs not only need to be created, but national and local efforts must be focused to ensure that workers have the necessary education and skills to perform available work.

The Northern Virginia Workforce Investment Board calls for greater integration between workforce development, education, and economic development to more efficiently connect people to jobs and improve regional competitiveness. Building a stronger pipeline of educated and skilled workers requires seamless connections between the components of the system and the skill demands of future workplaces. Further, the increasing workforce diversity offers new challenges and opportunities to create a workforce system focused on innovation and skills development.

### **Key Principles**

The Northern Virginia Workforce Board's workforce policy rests on six principles. These principles drive our local strategic thinking and, we believe should be included in a strengthened national workforce system.

1. **Provide Access.** The workforce development system should encourage, facilitate and operate multiple pathways to success. Key obstacles to developing a skilled workforce are cost, access, and completion. The development of multiple pathways to postsecondary credentials for all workers is critical to ensuring our nation can compete in the global marketplace.
2. **Consolidation for Effectiveness.** Streamlining the number of programs and funding streams within and across federal agencies as a strategy to increase quality, effectiveness and to ease navigation for both businesses and jobseekers

enhances the workforce system's ability to respond to current and future labor market needs.

3. **Demand Side Driven.** A national workforce development system must be forward thinking and responsive to future market-place demands. Workforce development must be positioned legislatively as a viable partner with economic development, industry, and education. The workforce system should be flexible and support a ready and skilled workforce by exchanging workforce and economic intelligence and by aligning education and training to create a steady supply of competitive workers to meet supply and demand.
4. **Regional Collaboration.** Regional collaboration must be fostered to create a viable workforce development system that links the education system, the business community, economic development, and workforce development. Local Workforce Boards should be positioned as the regional convener to foster such collaborations.
5. **Accountability.** A national workforce system should focus on the return on investment it provides to businesses and to the community. The system must be accountable and aligned with the national objectives. A national measurement system designed to ensure accountability should also be flexible enough to accommodate local labor market conditions and local system objectives. While it is important to measure performance in the short term, it is also important to measure longer term results, assure stewardship of Federal financial investment and the leverage that investment within the local community. The success of the National Workforce System should be articulated through the development of Return-On-Investment (ROI) measures.
6. **Sustainable Public Funding.** To create an effective and efficient workforce development system requires sustainable public funding. Investments must be made in both the delivery of services and the development of the infrastructure to deliver quality to businesses and jobseekers. Investments in building common technology systems and maintaining a locally based infrastructure is crucial to doing business into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and beyond.

## Policy Priorities for a National Workforce Investment System

### Governance

- **Business Led Boards.** Provide state workforce boards and local workforce areas with more flexibility in the composition of local workforce boards that maintain the majority business focus and are business-led; maintain the principle of inclusive representation that is found in current law; enhance the board's responsibility for oversight of workforce issues in the area and not just WIA programs.
- **Regionalization.** Strengthen the role of Governors to provide incentives for collaboration across workforce areas, both within a state and across state lines where appropriate.

- **Oversight.** Strengthen the role of the local boards to convene and connect economic development, education, and workforce development. Ensure local boards continue to provide oversight to the operating side of the regional workforce system.
- **Local Flexibility** - Retain local flexibility and promote cross-sector collaboration between workforce investment boards, businesses, labor, service providers, school districts, secondary education, and county/city and state institutions.

## Structure

- **One-Stops.** Maintain the infrastructure of single access point for partner services and universal access to core services. Expand eligibility by using other criteria in addition to income levels. A competitive economy requires that all individuals need workforce development services, training and retraining over the course of their working life. Mandate integration of workforce services in full service One Stop Centers by the mandatory Federal and State partner organizations.
- **Serving Businesses.** Recognize the importance of business to the nation's workforce development system by establishing strategies and initiatives that ensure the involvement of business leaders and provide relevant services to employers. Increased linkages between workforce, education, and economic development programs should be developed and innovative strategies such as use of business intermediaries, industry sector initiatives, and incumbent worker training programs (through on-the-job training and customized training) must be encouraged to meet employer needs.
- **Sequence of Services.** Reevaluate current requirements for the sequence of core, intensive, and training services, and provide greater flexibility to move customers through the various components of the system. Focus on promoting a system that allows the local area to evaluate each customer's needs and skill levels and, based on that evaluation, match the customer with the appropriate sequence of services to help them meet their employment goals.
- **Accountability Measures.**
  - Consider a new performance measure to increase entrepreneurial activities through the public workforce system;
  - Measure skills attainment as defined by business;
  - Measure services provided to businesses;
  - Encourage and provide credit for brokering training services (paid for with resources other than WIA Title I);
  - Capture the provision of core services;
  - Maintain a cost efficiency measure that accounts for multiple years of service for providing intensive and training services; and
  - Create a return on investment measure of dollars spent to dollars contributed to the economy.

## Eligibility

- Streamline the eligibility determination process. Align with other Federal workforce programs to allow automatic eligibility for WIA enrollment, if an individual had already been deemed eligible by other Federal means-tested programs such as the school lunch program.
- Combine the Workforce Investment Act Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and funding streams, considering all as adults with eligibility focused on long-term underemployed or less skilled and/or those who have been dislocated.

## Funding Formula

- Establish funding formula criteria that maintains or increases local area funding. Ensure local programs can deliver the full complement of workforce services to businesses and jobseekers.
- Establish more specific requirements for partners to fund One-Stop Center infrastructure and/or create a separate funding stream in the law for Center infrastructure.
- When appropriate, consolidate and combine program funding streams to achieve economic and administrative efficiency at the local service delivery level.

## Innovation

- **Offer Multiple Pathways to Secondary and Access to Postsecondary Credentials and Certifications.** Promote innovation and expand upon successful strategies to offer and expand career pathways in secondary education and to expand pathways to secondary and postsecondary credentials, industry recognized certifications, and employment.
- **Funds for Technology Solutions.** Provide and promote funding to build integrated technology solutions for ease of access to labor market data and to enhance operational efficiency across programs and agencies.

## Summary and Call to Action

It is critical to reauthorize the Federal Workforce Investment Act. We believe these principles and policy priorities should be key elements of the national workforce development system, which will make it more comprehensive, efficient, effective, and responsive to customer needs and ensure a sustainable and stable workforce system.