

## WIA Reauthorization Update

As the House prepares to develop its WIA reauthorization bill, we respectfully request that the following issues receive priority attention within the context of the seven guiding principles outlined below:

### Business-Driven

As cities and regions focus on the link between economic and workforce development, it is clear that training must be defined by employer needs. Accordingly, WIA reauthorization should:

- Ensure a continued strong, locally- and regionally-based business-led workforce investment system through the appointment of **local Boards by local elected officials**.
- Clarify the essential, pivotal role that local Boards are intended to play as conveners of key stakeholders for development and alignment of local and regional workforce and economic strategies; and as brokers of training and related services so that local boards are authorized to:
  - Collect local and regional data
  - Determine target industry sectors for special programming
  - Set standards for measurement of successful impacts and outcomes
  - Identify workforce needs in the broad community that will result in more effective programming of limited resources and service delivery methods
  - Prioritize key strategies and population segments
- Incorporate **business-focused metrics** into macro-level common measures (ones we recommend for the national level) as the system serves business customers in order to measure this impact.
- Provide special attention and funding on the once-in-a-generation opportunity to prepare workers to power our country's move to a **greener economy**; ensuring that training is aligned with employment demand.
- Allow for **more training flexibility** that can reflect customization for business needs

### Guided by Local Control

With an overall business-driven focus to workforce development, **a system that is guided by local institutions will allow for the development of programs that are informed by in-depth knowledge of the local business community**, hiring and training needs of local and regional businesses, and the promotion of greater accountability as policies are designed to reflect local trends. As such, WIA reauthorization should:

- Continue to allow local Boards to set local measures
- Provide customized training services to suit individual needs and allow for Board discretion to determine the right services and paths to training for each local area
- Allot a portion of formula funds to be spent at local discretion (e.g. 15%) to support local workforce initiatives for target populations or innovative strategies
- Encourage regional planning, partnerships and actions where they make sense for regional economies and provide flexibility that will allow local Boards to partner with other Boards on regional activities within states and across state lines
- Continue to provide Governors with the flexibility to determine the best delivery system for the provision of Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) services to ensure that jobseekers receive WIA wrap-around services, including more comprehensive and in-depth assessment, vocational/career counseling, case management and post-training assistance in addition to traditional TAA services.
- Provide local elected officials and Boards the ability to jointly determine the roles and responsibilities for each as well as maintain local governance over board structure, size and representation; service delivery management; budget, and strategic and operational planning.

### Funded to Reflect Its Importance

While the Great Recession of 2008-2009 has temporarily reduced the demand for skilled workers, the long-term trends are clear: business demand for skilled workers in the U.S. economy is expected to outpace the supply within

local labor markets throughout the country. This is negatively impacting our international economic competitiveness. In order for the U.S. to successfully address the shortage of skilled workers to meet business demands, **Congress must not only substantially increase its investment in workforce funding**, but it must ensure that funding supports programming that is designed to successfully prepare and train existing and new workers.

Additionally, Congress should ensure that public workforce development resources are accessible to all workers in need of assistance – including the adults and youth who have been subject to decreasing investments by the Department of Labor, as well as low-income workers. Accordingly, WIA reauthorization should:

- Be funded at an appropriate level of \$8.35 billion for FY10. This funding level is consistent with maintaining current funding levels for WIA programs at 2000 levels (adjusted for inflation), sustaining the levels included in the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA), and ensuring a continued strong Summer Youth program to address the crisis in youth employment. Consistent with this formula we strongly advocate for WIA investment to reach \$10 billion by 2012.
- Provide the flexibility to move funds between Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth funding streams and to fund customized training in areas such as basic skills/soft skills/job readiness
  - Support the current definition for administrative costs in WIA which is consistent with accounting practices used by business.
- Provide for **dedicated funding to support the One Stop Career Center infrastructure**

### Driven by Appropriate Measures

**Appropriate measures and data systems must be developed** to accurately reflect local and regional service strategies, economies, and business metrics. By allowing for locally- and/or regionally-set measures and systems, workforce activities and services in each service area can be tailored to quality of life measurements for each community. As such, WIA reauthorization should:

- Require national on-going studies and evaluation to measure success.
- **Allow local and regional areas to establish some of their own measures that incorporate the principals of national common measures** and incorporate the flexibilities in ARRA.
- Develop measures that reflect both individual and aggregate data points; as well as metrics that reflect business engagement and return on investment (ROI)

### Focused on Youth

By 2010, the largest segment of the nation's labor force will be teens and young adults as 41 million new workers enter the workforce beginning to replace 76 million retiring workers. Only a significant reinvestment in all youth, but most especially those young people with low educational attainment and poor connections to work, will generate enough skilled, technologically savvy, and educated, U.S. workers to keep our nation competitive in the global economy. WIA Reauthorization should include:

- **An Enhanced Summer Jobs Initiative:** The Congressional investment in the Summer Youth Employment Program through ARRA provides a significant experience to youth this summer. **This investment should be sustained formally through WIA reauthorization.**
- **Multiple Pathways to Academic Success For Disconnected Youth:** At a time when U.S. employers are requiring post-secondary education and/or training for entry-level jobs, we must develop more options which enable youth to achieve a high-school credential coupled with solid career competence for training in growing career fields. The system must reach out to our disconnected youth and **offer them a variety of non-traditional pathways for academic credentialing and multiple opportunities, coupled with comprehensive support services, to attain applied skills and career preparation** in industries of continued or emerging growth.
- **Career Development & Education Partnerships:** By implementing multiple pathways during high school to the world of work and careers we provide opportunities for all students to earn portable credentials; prepare students for first jobs in high-skill, high-wage careers; and increase students' opportunities for further education, including education in a two- or four-year college or university. A year-round, multi-year set of

career competency development strategies and youth employment engagement opportunities -- embedded and aligned to core education instruction -- will increase the number of students graduating from high school prepared for careers in demand by the growing business sectors and/or post-secondary educational attainment aligned to key labor market growth clusters.

- **Streamline Eligibility Requirements to Reach and Engage Youth**: A re-authorized WIA should continue to focus services on those youth most in need--young people living in low-income families and youth who face significant barriers to employment. However, the legislation should **streamline the process of identifying and enrolling these youth** by enabling the local workforce investment areas to align eligibility with other similar poverty indicators used by Education, Human Services and/or Economic Development such as Empowerment and Enterprise Zones, free/reduced lunch or families receiving TANF or Food Stamps.

### **Built on Partnerships**

Since the initial implementation of WIA, local systems have built leveraged partnerships with multiple stakeholders. These partnerships have allowed local areas to bring more to the workforce system than required, strengthening the workforce system and providing comprehensive, cohesive services to jobseekers. **Development and support of these partnerships should be an integral part of WIA reauthorization** as follows:

- A critical role of the local Board should be the alignment of partners for service delivery that delivers a mutual benefit to both the workforce system as well as the partner.
- The local Board should play a key role in partnership development by:
  - Aligning/leveraging resources
  - Convening partners
  - Translating partner feedback into program design
  - Sharing best practices and innovation
- The local Board should have **flexibility to determine partners that are appropriate to each area's strategic plan** within secondary and higher education, local business and associations, organized labor and community-based agencies providing support services.
- Structure funding to allow areas to receive additional funding incentives to reward leveraged funds for operation (in-kind and financial)
- **Align goals of workforce and adult education around economic competitiveness** as a key outcome-to provide a streamlined process of education and career preparation
  - Adult Education, ESL, Pell Grants and Wagner-Peyser must be funded to reflect their importance as well (not just WIA)
  - Adult Education should be integrated with workforce programming
  - Contextualized learning should be integrated with career education

### **One-Stop Career Centers as Critical Service Delivery Mechanism**

One-Stop Centers currently serve as the critical mechanism for workforce service delivery. These Centers are the successful, public service delivery arm of local workforce systems, providing direct job placement services to local jobseekers and engaging businesses to serve their hiring and training needs.

- **One-Stop Centers**, created through the original WIA legislation, **should remain the primary service delivery mechanism** under new legislation and **receive dedicated funding to support its infrastructure**.
- Incorporate technology into One Stop service delivery to expand and enhance the services offered to accommodate the diversity of job seekers seeking assistance. One Stops should provide online labor market information, career development programs and skills training to serve workers at every all experience and socioeconomic levels.