



Illinois Workforce Innovation Board

Bruce Rauner, Governor

John Rico, Co-Chair
Sean McCarthy, Co-Chair

Request to Approve Integrated Business Services Framework

Request

The Integrated Business Services Working Group requests the approval of Illinois' Integrated Business Services Framework at the State and Regional Levels (the Framework).

Background

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires the State to align workforce programs, foster regional collaboration and improve services to employers.

- **Requires States to Strategically Align Workforce Development Programs:** WIOA requires that employment and training services provided by the core programs are coordinated and complementary so that job seekers acquire skills and credentials that meet employers' needs.
- **Foster Regional Collaboration:** WIOA requires the alignment of workforce development programs with regional economic development strategies to meet the needs of local and regional employers.
- **Improve Services to Employers and Promotes Work-Based Training:** The fundamental goal of WIOA is to support economic growth and business expansion by ensuring the workforce system is job-driven, matching employers with skilled individuals. State and local boards are responsible for activities to meet the workforce needs of local and regional employers.

More specifically, several functions of state workforce boards relate to outreach and engagement of businesses and employers including the development and continuous improvement of the workforce system through the development of strategies for providing effective outreach to and improved access for individuals and employers who could benefit from services provided through the workforce development system; the development and expansion of strategies for meeting the needs of employers, workers, and jobseekers, particularly through industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations; supporting effective delivery of services to workers, jobseekers and employers; and the identification and dissemination of information on best practices for the effective operation of one-stop centers, relating to the use of business outreach, partnerships, and service delivery strategies, including strategies for serving individuals with barriers to employment.

Illinois' Unified Workforce plan includes a vision to *"Promote employer-driven talent solutions that integrate education, workforce and economic development resources across systems"*. A key strategy in the plan is to *"support employer-driven regional sector initiatives"*. This strategy specifically seeks *"to align and integrate business services among the core programs along with state and regional economic development partners"*. Activities will focus on providing integrated business services to employers in targeted industries and occupations.

The Illinois workNet Center System, an American Job Center is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. All voice telephone numbers on this website may be reached by persons using TTY/TDD equipment by calling TTY (800) 526-0844 or 711.

In 2016, the WIOA core partners including the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Illinois Department of Employment Security, Illinois Community College Board, and Illinois Department of Human Services received a technical assistance award from the United States Department of Labor to “inventory” business services in Illinois and identify best practices from other states. The final report included a number of recommendations for Illinois including the development of an Integrated Business Services Framework.

In 2017, the WIOA core partners and key leaders of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) established a working group to create a framework for workforce, education and economic development partners to better listen to, learn from, and respond to Illinois’ businesses within the context of a regional sector-based talent pipeline model. The draft framework was released for comment and the working group coordinated two public webinars to explain the framework and request feedback. The framework has also been reviewed and approved by the WIOA core partner agency directors.

Findings

Eight foundational elements for the framework have been identified and recommended by the workgroup. The integrated provision of business services should be:

- **SECTOR-BASED** – The provision of business services should align around regionally identified industry sectors significant to the regional economy.
- **TRANSFORMATIONAL** – Engagement of businesses should provide a platform for regular and ongoing dialogue – not one-off interactions – providing a transformation of the relationships between business and workforce partners.
- **REGIONAL** – Service delivery should be regional in nature and should align with the Governor’s ten economic development regions.
- **COORDINATED** – The framework should describe coordinated approaches and strategies used by *all* partners to meet business needs.
- **UNITED** – Building upon efforts already underway, efforts should continue to co-locate partners in order to ensure maximum coordination.
- **FLEXIBLE** – The framework should provide enough guidance to be helpful, but should also allow flexibility for regional innovation and customization.
- **ALIGNED** – Existing policies/procedures should be reviewed and revised to ensure alignment and progress toward service integration.
- **ALLOWABLE** – Partners’ federal mandates to provide specific, related services must still be met when developing the state framework.

The workgroup identified five components that are necessary for the integrated provision of business services in the state and its ten economic development regions:

- **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE** - At both the state and regional level, organizational structures will be developed that enable communication between partners in order to develop a single, reliable, agreed upon strategy to support engagement and contact between employers and the workforce/economic development system. The form of these organizational structures will vary according to economic development region and sector. Leveraging existing relationships between and among businesses and public partners is recommended as the most reliable initial strategy for engagement with particular employers and sectors. Each of the ten economic development regions will develop mechanisms that will connect business to the full range of partner services – regardless of source.
- **MANAGEMENT OF BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE** - Given the need to share information across partners -- at the state level, but particularly at the regional/local level -- management of business intelligence is critical.

Recognizing the challenges of creating a statewide cross-agency Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, the state's initial strategy will focus on supporting creative approaches to meeting these regional/local level responsibilities. It is important for regional partners to understand the grassroots nature of business intelligence development. Perhaps the most important data development issue will always be the creation of methods to record and access partner knowledge regarding employer needs, to share that knowledge across the partner network, and then to utilize that knowledge to jointly develop and implement proactive solutions to business and sector needs.

- **SOLUTIONS-BASED SERVICE OFFERINGS** – The service offerings provided to businesses must be focused on delivering timely solutions to expressed business needs. Each region should have its own standardized process for contacting employers in each targeted industry sector, and have the capability of providing direct access to appropriate services or referral to all partners who can provide those services. Solutions-based service first requires a focus on listening to what business communicates that they need, and then requires flexible, creative and timely responses to those needs - a process that builds a portfolio of customized solutions for businesses, without merely “dumping” pre-packaged programs and processes on them.
- **EMPHASIS ON WORK-BASED LEARNING AND OTHER BUSINESS-FOCUSED SERVICES** - Closely tied to the solutions sought by businesses is the expanded use of work-based learning (Registered Apprenticeships, Youth Apprenticeships, Pre-Apprenticeships, Customized Training, On-the-Job Training, Incumbent Worker Training and others). This emphasis recognizes work-based learning as often the most effective mechanism for delivering Training and Education solutions, in an environment that is directly shaped to and for the needs of the employer – their own business.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT** - The four framework elements discussed so far will bring significant changes in the focus, intent and utilization of business services. Along with those changes comes the need to develop appropriate measures of performance. This will enable the measurement (and dissemination) of the meaningful results of those business services activities, will also serve to establish feedback loops that will facilitate data-driven course corrections to the other four framework elements. In particular, these measures should be focused on the value of these services to businesses, through measures such as: reduced turnover, reduction in the time required to fill vacancies, enhanced employee retention, additional viable candidates applying for work, and enhanced productivity.

Considerations

The development and implementation of this framework is one of the strategies of the IWIB's strategic plan *Business Engagement Goal Group*.

It is important to note that this motion to approve the “high-level” business services framework is needed to establish a foundation that will support more specific implementation strategies. The framework includes a number of promising strategies at the State and Regional levels to help illustrate each component of the framework. The next phase of this project will be focused on developing and executing the next level of implementation strategies.

Motion

“I move that the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board adopt the Illinois’ Integrated Business Services Framework for unified business services at the state and regional levels.”

Margi Schiemann, Work Group Member