

One-Stop Center Certification in Illinois under WIOA

Background and Policy Considerations

A. Introduction

WIOA provides central points of service for job-seekers and employers to access employment and training services through its system of approximately 3,000 One-Stop centers nationwide. These centers provide state and local WIOA employment and training activities and coordinate a variety of workforce development, educational, and human service partner programs, all in response to the employment and training needs of local area employers. One-Stop services must be made accessible by physically colocating them or making other arrangements. Employment Service offices are the only ones that must be physically colocated at the One-Stop center under WIOA.

State Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), in consultation with chief elected officials and local boards, are required to establish objective criteria and procedures for local boards to use to certify comprehensive One-Stop Centers.

Federal guidance regarding the certification criteria is minimal. WIOA specifies that three areas must be addressed by the State WDB in their certification processes: effectiveness (including customer satisfaction), physical and programmatic accessibility, and continuous improvement. Local workforce boards may establish additional criteria or set higher standards for service coordination and must review and update the criteria every two years. Other than those requirements, the only other direction from the U.S. Department of Labor is in an August 2015 Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) in which states are encouraged to adopt a vision of One-Stop Centers under WIOA as “quality-focused, employer-driven, customer-centered, and tailored to meet the needs of regional economies.”¹ Nineteen characteristics of a high-quality One-Stop Center were described in three functional categories:

1. Provide excellent customer service to job seekers, workers and businesses
 - Reflect a welcoming environment to all customer groups who are served
 - Develop, offer, and deliver quality business services
 - Improve the skills of job seeker and worker customers
 - Create opportunities for individuals at all skills levels and levels of experience
 - Provide career services that motivate, support, and empower customers
 - Value skill development
2. Reflect innovative and effective service design
 - Use an integrated and expert intake process for all customers entering the One-stop Centers
 - Design and implement practices that actively engage industry sectors
 - Balance traditional labor exchange services with strategic talent development
 - Ensure meaningful access to all customers
 - Include both virtual and center-based service delivery
 - Incorporate innovative and evidence based delivery models
3. Operate with integrated management systems and high-quality staffing
 - Reflect the establishment of robust partnerships among partners
 - Organize and integrate services by function
 - Develop and maintain integrated case management systems

¹ U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, Training and Employment Guidance Letter WIOA No. 4-15, “Operating Guidance for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act”, p. 3.

- Develop and implement operational policies that achieve integration and expanded service offerings
- Use common performance indicators
- Train and equip One-Stop Center staff in an ongoing learning process to provide superior service

As a result, states have taken markedly different approaches to setting these criteria. These range from a *de minimis* policy set by the North Dakota Workforce Development Council² to an ambitious and comprehensive set of criteria developed by the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board.³

B. Timeline

Local boards may begin the process of certifying their comprehensive one-stop centers while negotiating their memoranda of understandings (MOUs); however, the executed MOU must be in place before local boards can approve the comprehensive one-stop center certifications. An adjusted timeline is included as Appendix 1 to these criteria.

For the program year beginning July 1, 2017, a one-stop operator must be in place prior to certification of comprehensive one-stop centers.

C. One-Stop Certification in Illinois

The IWIB adopted criteria and procedures in late 2015, but they were put on hold when the U.S. Department of Labor extended the effective date for implementing infrastructure funding requirements, which are closely tied to One-Stop Center certification, to July 1, 2017. An opportunity exists to review the criteria to ensure that the attributes most essential to the development of high quality One-Stop centers have been included. These criteria will drive the design and implementation of other workforce system components and processes, including selection of the One-Stop operators, determining eligibility of training providers, and providing Rapid Response services at the State and local levels, among others.

On November 15, 19 members of the IWIB One-Stop Certification Policy Work Group representing local and State workforce boards, local workforce areas, and state agencies met in Normal, Illinois. A number of consensus points were generated that provide a framework for moving forward. These are summarized in the inset below.

Consensus Points from November 15, 2016 One-Stop Policy Work Group Meeting

1. The group opted to work with the existing draft "Illinois Workforce Innovation Board Criteria and Procedures for Certifying Comprehensive One-Stop Centers under WIOA".
2. The process should capture promising and effective practices in One-Stop operation throughout Illinois.
3. Instead of focusing on "minimal" certification measures, an "initial" level should be established that provides a reasonable baseline statewide and also sets the stage for continuous improvement. This enables Illinois to balance compliance under WIOA with a more developmental approach.
4. In addition to DOL's vision of One-Stop centers, the principles stated in Illinois' Unified WIOA plan must also be addressed in the certification criteria.
5. We should consider approaches taken by other states to One-Stop certification.
6. The criteria should be realistic with respect to state agency autonomy and resource limitations. For example, robust staff development may not be possible across all agency and program partners, particularly those who do not report to the One-Stop operator.

² <http://www.jobsnd.com/sites/default/files/ND-One-Stop-Career-Center-Cert-Policy.pdf>

³ <http://www.kwib.ky.gov/careercentercertification.htm>

Approaches by Other States

As described earlier, much variation is evident in how states are approaching One-Stop certification. In addition to the North Dakota and Kentucky examples, a middle ground may be found in states such as Colorado and Hawaii. These states developed a succinct (i.e. one and one-half page) table with a limited number of criteria identified for each of the three required focus areas (effectiveness, physical and programmatic accessibility, and continuous improvement) and service integration. While this approach is likely to require less time by the review teams, it also is likely to result in a much lower shared foundation across the states' One-Stop Centers. Further, where measures are provided they often do not lend themselves to objective measurement.

The state against which Illinois should consider benchmarking is Kentucky. Their 27-page "Application/Review Form" goes far beyond the minimal requirements of WIOA and embraces addresses the characteristics described in DOL's vision of One-Stop centers. Kentucky has organized its standards by "Employer Services" and "Job Seeker Services" (with each one addressing "Organization and Staffing," "Providing Quality Services," and "Listening to and Satisfying" [each customer type]; and a set of "Career Center Management" standards addressing "Managing Integrated Service Delivery" and "Physical Infrastructure and Accessibility". As a result, the concepts of customer service, program effectiveness, continuous improvement, and service integration are evident in many of the standards and measures. In addition, the measures used to assess whether standards have been met are called "Baseline Measures," signaling that ongoing assessment of progress over time will occur.

To help structure the next conversation of the One-Stop Work Group on November 29, Kentucky's One-Stop certification standards have been aligned with the IWIB's preliminary One-Stop criteria in the attached background material. Because Kentucky used a different organizing structure, their standards have been associated with the most similar IWIB category. This provides the Work Group with an opportunity to consider whether any of Kentucky's standards should be incorporated into Illinois' criteria.

The last page of the attached background material is an excerpt from Illinois' Unified WIOA Plan containing the guiding workforce system principles. These will also be discussed to ensure that they are evident in the One-Stop certification criteria.

Attachment
Background Materials
IWIB One-Stop Certification Policy Work Group

Comparison of Illinois Preliminary One-Stop Certification Standards with Kentucky Standards

Preliminary IWIB Standards	Kentucky Career Center Certification Review Standards
<p>1. <u>Effectiveness</u>: is the One-Stop center meeting the workforce development needs of participants and the employment needs of business? Is the center operating in a cost-efficient manner? Coordinating services among partner programs? Providing maximum access to partner programs at times that meet participant needs? Do the required partners focus on outcomes and measure attainment of outcomes and goals?</p>	<p>Note: Kentucky has organized its standards by “Employer Services” and “Job Seeker Services” (with each one addressing “Organization and Staffing,” “Providing Quality Services,” and “Listening to and Satisfying” [each customer type]; and a set of “Career Center Management” standards addressing “Managing Integrated Service Delivery” and “Physical Infrastructure and Accessibility”.</p>
<p>a. <i>Governance</i> – all required governing documents are in place.</p>	<p><i>As part of the application package, required documentation includes an MOU, Business Services Functional Organizational Chart, Standard Operating Procedures, and Career Center Functional Organizational Chart</i></p>
<p>b. <i>Responsiveness to participant needs</i> – Required partners identify how services and referrals among partners will be integrated.</p>	<p>a. Job seekers have multiple avenues to access system services. b. Center jobseeker staff are organized and located by function (e.g. orientation, assessment, training, job placement, etc.) rather than by agency or funding stream. c. All Center partners are trained to provide seamless customer service to job seekers and can assist customers in efficiently accessing all needed services.</p>
<p>c. <i>Responsiveness to business needs</i> – Required partners specify how they will respond to local economic needs of the local area.</p>	<p>a. Each workforce area has established a regional Business Services Team (BST) comprised of knowledgeable business services partners with the ability to connect employers to a full range of partner services. b. The Regional BST is overseen by the LWIB or by a different designated entity as appropriate for the region, as a unified activity. c. Each BST has a clearly-recognized, central point of contact for employers in each targeted industry sector with the capability of providing direct access to appropriate services or staff who can provide those services.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d. The BST actively works to build relationships with the employer community to identify employer needs and provide timely solutions. e. BST members effectively interact with employers and employer/industry organizations within their industry sectors and with economic development. f. Every Career Center in a workforce region has designated a single point of contact (and a back-up) for employer services. (This individual need not be dedicated full-time to providing employer services.) g. BST members meet regularly to share information, develop leadership, discuss new employer services opportunities, develop solutions to address identified challenges and barriers, and improve the means of connecting employers to services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d. <i>Performance</i> – Negotiated local levels of performance – where they are established and shared – are achieved. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. <i>Program coordination</i> - Program partners collaborate to provide access to integrated programs, services, and activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Each workforce area has a demonstrated capacity to deliver an array of “bundled” services that are positioned and packaged as solutions to challenges identified by employers. b. Services resources are “packaged” as individualized solutions to meet jobseekers’ needs and goals. The Career Center provides helpful and useful resources and information to support customers’ job readiness, employment, and career advancement. c. There are clear expectations for partner presence and roles at Career Centers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> f. <i>Operational coordination</i> – Service delivery and administration are streamlined and efficient. <p>Add “Managing Integrated Service Delivery”?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Career Center expedites customer flow. b. Customers are provided information about all services available via the Career Center in a service-focused, customer-friendly mode. c. A unified management process is in place to align jobseeker services to employer demand. d. All customers are provided helpful and useful assessment of length and intensity as appropriate. e. The Center demonstrates a team-based approach to “simultaneous” job seeker service delivery. f. The Career Center maintains an operational resource room with trained staff to support customers’ job readiness and employment search. g. The Center clearly communicates expectations to customers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> h. To the maximum extent possible, services are integrated and duplication in service delivery reduced. i. Centers adopt best practices in internal communication. j. The management structure at each Career Center is clear and effective. k. The Center has a supervisor and staff assigned to each customer-focused function (e.g. reception, resource room assessment, career counseling) or group of closely-related functions. l. Supervisors and staff are assigned to each functional unit based on skills, abilities, and other factors related to capacity to deliver the service(s), regardless of employing agencies.
m. <i>Service hours</i> – Maximum access to program services is provided during regular business hours.	
n. <i>Equal opportunity awareness</i> – Staff and program partners are familiar with and apply laws, regulations, and policies regarding nondiscrimination and equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities.	
2. Physical Accessibility [add “and Infrastructure?”]: Is the One-Stop center’s location and layout inclusive of individuals regardless of abilities and mobility? Does the facility comply with current federal standards for design and access?	Requires ADA compliance letter with application
a. <i>Physical layout</i> – The location and physical layout of the One-Stop center eliminates structural barriers and is accessible to people of all capabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Centers maintain a professional and welcoming appearance. b. Centers have space and capacity that is appropriate for customer needs, customer traffic, and key Center functions. c. Each Center provides a safe and secure environment for its employees and customers.
b. <i>One-Stop center location</i> – The center is accessible by public transportation, driving, or walking.	a. Career Centers are accessible so that all customers can fully utilize services and resources
3. Programmatic Access: Does the One-Stop provide equal access to all required programs, services, and activities to eligible participants and employers regardless of abilities, mobility, age, language, learning style, intelligence, or education level? Are services provided on-demand, in real time in the physical One-Stop, or via technology consistent with the “direct linkage” requirement in WIOA?	a. Customers are routed, through facilitated rather than unassisted referral, to the proper services/activities/partners/external contacts that respond to their reasons(s) for visiting the Center.

a. <i>Career services</i> – Customers have equal access to the 13 required career services for adults and dislocated workers.	
b. <i>Program services</i> – Customers have access to training, education, employment, supportive and business services.	
c. <i>Direct linkage</i> – Customers have access to on-demand services in person and/or via technology.	
d. <i>Equal access</i> – Individuals with disabilities have access to programs or activities in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs.	
e. <i>Accommodations</i> – Reasonable accommodations are provided to individuals with disabilities or language barriers to fully access services. Accessible technology is available to the customer.	An ADA compliance letter is submitted with the application package.
f. <i>Common identifier</i> – The “American Job Center” common identifier is displayed.	
4. <u>Continuous Improvement</u> : Does the Center have the mechanisms, processes, and capacity to assess and improve upon the effectiveness, physical accessibility, and programmatic accessibility of the center? Does it support the achievement of the local negotiated levels of performance?	
a. <i>Improving performance</i> – The local board is engaged in making strategic improvements.	a. On a Center-wide basis, Career Centers track customer activity, customer experience, and employment outcomes and use this information to improve quality and use resources most effectively.
b. <i>Customer feedback</i> – Feedback from customers is systematically collected, analyzed, and used to continuously improve service delivery and operations.	<p>a. The BST consults with employers and performs employer needs assessments to inform and guide services and delivery processes.</p> <p>b. The BST, working with Career Centers, has mechanisms in place to collect and analyze system-level feedback on both processes and outcomes from existing employer customers at regular intervals.</p> <p>c. The Career Center actively solicits feedback from all job seeker customers to determine their reasons for visiting the Center and their satisfaction with both processes and the value of services received.</p>
c. <i>Evaluation of internal operations</i> – Operational effectiveness is monitored and improvement opportunities suggested.	<p>a. The workforce area has goals, measures, and processes in place to track employers’ use of workforce system services and resources.</p> <p>b. There is a process in place to use employer feedback and internally-tracked data to improve,</p>

	<p>change, and diversify employer services, resources, and processes accordingly, on a regular and ongoing basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Center management and staff regularly assess job seeker services and service delivery to identify opportunities to reduce duplication, improve the quality of services, and increase the time available for staff to spend with customers. d. To better align partners and ensure that all partners' capacity is fully understood and utilized, all partners share their agency's quantitative goals with all others.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d. <i>Professional development of staff</i> – One-Stop center and required partner staff invest in continual professional development so they are aware of evidence-based research and current local, State and Federal policies and procedures. 	<p>Kentucky requires a "Career Center Staff Development Plan" with the application documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. BST members are fully capable of carrying out the duties and responsibilities of their positions. b. Career Centers provide staff development that is appropriate for each individual's specialty as well as the more generic staff development needs.

Principles from Illinois' Unified WIOA State Plan

- Demand Driven Orientation – Through a sector strategy framework, the state should support the systemic assessment of business needs for talent across local, regional and state levels and ensure that strong partnerships with business drive decision-making across the talent pipeline.
- Strong Partnerships with Business at All Levels – Strong partnerships with business should focus on equipping employers with the support and tools they need to define in-demand skills and articulate those needs to education and training providers. Strong partnerships at the regional and local level should be recognized and inform the development of high-quality partnerships across the state.
- Career Pathways to Jobs of Today and Tomorrow – Partnerships with business should drive the development of career pathways that meet employers' skills needs today, while offering individuals clear opportunities to build and upgrade their skills and advance their career over time. Those pathways should be integrated within the P-20 system, including adult education, to help students and young adults identify career pathway options and offer flexibility to build upon their skills to meet the evolving needs of the global economy.
- Cross-agency Collaboration and Alignment – Developing career pathways and stackable credentials will demand collaboration and alignment across agencies that contribute to Illinois' overall talent pipeline. There should be a focus on improving the strategic connections across all components and levels of the education and workforce systems to ensure no "dead ends" exist.
- Integrated Service Delivery – Enhanced collaboration and alignment across state agencies at a strategic level should lead to better service delivery integration. Multiple state agencies and partners are positioned to support the success of individuals and businesses. Technology and integrated data systems can help illustrate those interrelationships and position the system to collaborate across agencies to deliver the right services at the right time.
- Access and Opportunity for All Populations – Coordinated and comprehensive services can help targeted populations prepare for and advance along a career pathway. Connecting individuals with relevant supports, such as transportation, child care and transition services enables the systems to be responsive to the needs of individuals' workforce readiness.
- Clear Metrics for Progress and Success – The Unified State Plan should include metrics for assessing progress and success. As the talent pipeline serves two customers – businesses and individuals – those metrics should reflect the strategic priorities of the state that relate to building a globally competitive workforce. Illinois will develop metrics or examine existing framework metrics that define successful career pathway programs (i.e., Alliance for Quality Career Pathways (AQCP)).
- Focus on Continuous Improvement and Innovation – The system should establish mechanisms for continual assessment of system performance and opportunities for improvement, as well as for encouraging innovation and disseminating best practices. This includes the continued enhancement of non-traditional methods for delivering education and training. Additionally, the growing role of entrepreneurship and its contributions to employment and economic growth will be an outcome of continuous improvement and innovation.