



Louisiana Workforce Commission Statewide Service Integration Report

***Opportunities for Advancing Louisiana's
Workforce System to Meet the
Challenges of the 21st Century***

An independent review of the
Louisiana workforce system

August 2010



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Many people took time out of already busy schedules to talk with us and offer their insights and opinions about the Louisiana workforce system and their hopes for the future of the state. Their contributions made this project a success and their dedication to the people of Louisiana bodes well for the state's future.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
1. Introduction.....	20
1.1. Scope of Review and Methodology	23
2. Organization and Structure	26
2.1. Background	26
2.2. Findings.....	27
2.3. Recommendations.....	29
2.4. Implementation Guidelines.....	34
3. Assessment of Services at the Local Level.....	35
3.1. Background	35
3.2. Findings.....	38
3.3. Recommendations.....	40
A. Staff Training Investments	41
B. Demand-driven approaches to customer service	46
C. Infrastructure Improvements	54
D. Program Enhancements	58
E. Expanding and Developing Partnerships	63
3.4. Implementation Guidelines.....	70
4. Community Services Block Grant	71
4.1. Background	71
4.2. Findings.....	73
4.3. Recommendations.....	74
4.4. Implementation Guidelines.....	78
5. Reemployment Programs	80
5.1. Background	80
5.2. Findings.....	80
5.3. Recommendations.....	81
5.4. Implementation Guidelines.....	86
6. Louisiana Rehabilitative Services	87
6.1. Background	87
6.2. Findings.....	89
6.3. Recommendations.....	91
6.4. Implementation Guidelines.....	96
7. Department of Children and Family Services	97
7.1. Background	97
7.2. Findings.....	98
7.3. Recommendations.....	101
7.4. Implementation Guidelines.....	104

8. Economic Development..... 105
8.1. Background 105
8.2. Findings 105
8.3. Recommendations 107
8.4. Implementation Guidelines..... 112

9. Louisiana Community and Technical College System..... 113
9.1. Background 113
9.2. Findings 114
9.3. Recommendations 116
9.4. Implementation Guidelines..... 121

10. Summary and Conclusion..... 122

Attachments.....Volume 2



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) engaged **Public Works**, and its partner Structured Employment and Economic Development Corporation (**Seedco**) – two firms with considerable experience in workforce strategic planning, policy and implementation – to help the State build on its work to integrate multiple workforce, training and support programs and to develop plans for both consolidation and collaboration among the various agencies and funding streams related to workforce development.

Specifically, **Public Works** and **Seedco** were charged with reviewing the current Louisiana workforce system, identifying best practices and making recommendations on what actions Louisiana can take to increase cooperation, coordination and consolidation of workforce programs. As such, this report presents a comprehensive review of the State's workforce system, highlighting strengths, challenges, and opportunities to improve integration, coordination, and operation of programs – including examples of collaboration and program design within Louisiana that might be considered for replication Statewide.

Our findings, recommendations and suggested implementation activities are divided into eight major areas: 1) Organization and Structure; 2) Assessment of Services at the Local Level; 3) Community Services Block Grant; 4) Reemployment; 5) Louisiana Rehabilitative Services; 6) Department of Children and Family Services; 7) Louisiana Economic Development, and; 8) Louisiana Community and Technical College System

Each section includes a background discussion of the current organization, identification of promising practices from around the country, analysis of current policy and operations, recommendations to be considered by the LWC as it develops a plan for moving forward, and an outline of next steps to be considered by the LWC and the WIC.

Below is a summary of findings and recommendations for each area covered in the report.

SECTION 2: ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

With the enactment of Act 743, the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) was given the authority and responsibility for the integration of the workforce system throughout the state with an advisory role established for the Louisiana Workforce Council. The legislation intended for the Council and Commission to bring about meaningful business participation and to achieve a comprehensive, responsive, business-driven system – either through actual consolidation of programs and services or establishing cooperative agreements between partner agencies and the Louisiana Workforce Commission.

The WIC as it is now structured began meeting in December 2009 and meets monthly. One committee – Occupational Forecasting Conference – is mandated in legislation; an Executive Committee was also formed recently. Ad hoc committees are used for specific initiatives on a more short-term basis – currently two ad hoc committees are meeting:

Findings

Efforts to ensure collaboration between the WIC and all relevant entities have had some success, and there is general recognition that the WIC's primary objectives are to advise the LWC on workforce integration strategies and forecast the State's workforce priority needs so that appropriate training opportunities can be developed to meet business demand.¹

As with any new group, the WIC struggles with its responsibilities and capabilities in the real world as compared to the goals of Act 743 as they are written and envisioned. In addition, prior to the enactment of Act 743, the seven key agencies involved in workforce programs – the LWC, Louisiana Economic Development (LED), Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS), the Regents, Department of Education, Department of Social Services (now Department of Children and Families), and Department of Corrections) – met regularly in cabinet-level meetings to ensure a coordinated policy and implementation workforce strategy were in place to further the Governor's agenda. After the passage of Act 743, this structured, Cabinet-level approach through a defined taskforce stopped such meetings.

Recommendations

- **Reestablish the Workforce Development Cabinet** to create a mechanism to foster interaction among State agencies at a level needed to ensure they are all working for common goals as established by the Governor.
- **Establish committees to engage WIC members, better use the expertise of the WIC to advise on policy and support initiatives, and increase opportunities for additional resource people to be involved in key areas.**
- **Establish more capacity within the LWC to staff key initiatives** through the appointment of a Strategic Initiatives Work Group. Establishing a team of highly-motivated staff who can be "pulled" from around the agency to form a Strategic Initiatives Work Group would enable the LWC to expand the capacity of senior managers and manage the implementation of projects important to the LWC.

SECTION 3: ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

In 2006, the State developed and implemented a new service-delivery model for Louisiana's Business and Career Services Center (BCSC) system to: 1) become more demand-driven and employer focused to meet the needs of local businesses; 2) better coordinate service offerings and provide more systematic, streamlined approaches to meet the needs of customers; and 3) improve performance outcomes and the quality of services through integrated service-delivery strategies.

Findings

The BCSC system has significant strengths to build on and has experienced considerable success to date connecting job-seekers to training and employment, as well as meeting the workforce demands of local employers. Conversations with BCSC staff suggest that most agree that the model being used is sound and that BCSC customers on the whole are better served as a result of the systems that have been put in place since 2006. Further, it is evident that BCSC Directors and staff are deeply committed to serving their communities, and that the system overall is rich in experience and knowledge at the field level. There is also a genuine desire to share information, create internal efficiencies and partner more effectively with key stakeholders to build institutional knowledge.

Nonetheless, these strengths have been compromised by a number of challenges facing the LWC and BCSCs in recent years, including diminishing resources, the Statewide hiring freeze, and budget cuts at a time when demand for services is soaring due to the economic downturn and the oil spill in the Gulf; changes in LWC leadership and poor communication systems; the highly centralized nature of the current system; confusion regarding how to best implement the model; and technology shortcomings.

Recommendations

Staff Training Investments

- **Create a Training Unit within the Office of Workforce Development, and/or determine primary point of contact at the LWC for all training-related questions and requests.**
- **Retrain BCSC staff to ensure uniform understanding of the model, and establish regular train-the-trainer sessions for each region.** While BCSC Directors are experienced professionals who understand the model and its goals, training for mid-level managers and frontline staff on the model would be extremely useful.
- **Encourage local flexibility in service implementation efforts and develop customized training and/or technical assistance for rural and urban regions.** Once training is provided to all BCSC staff on the model itself, the LWC can focus on helping regional leaders refine the model to meet specific regional challenges.
- **Invest in cross-training efforts within each BCSC.** Cross training within the teams at each Center is critical to ensure that all staff are knowledgeable about all aspects of BCSC work. Key training topics include staff qualifications and responsibilities, coaching practices, goal-setting, time management, refining shared definitions of job readiness, and setting priorities. This training should also be supplemented with one-on-one support related to particularly difficult challenges.

- **Clarify roles and responsibilities of Recruitment and Placement teams and Business Services Representatives (BSRs).** Confusion about who is ultimately responsible for maintaining existing employer relationships and cultivating new relationships could be alleviated through additional training. Other specific training focuses for BSRs, Business Services teams and Recruitment and Placement staff should include: use of LMI data, information on best practices and successful strategies for engaging employers, and placement tracking.

Demand-Driven Approaches to Customer Service

- **Prioritize employers as primary customers of the system and increase the capacity of Recruitment and Placement teams and BSRs to perform job development duties.** While some Centers provide high-quality employer services, opportunities should be generated across the system to transition all Centers beyond crisis-driven activities that are focused on supply-side customers.
- **Build a more structured talent pipeline made up of properly educated, skilled, and prepared job-seekers who are available to compete in local and regional economies.** Engaging these partners in a consistent and strategic manner would complement BCSC efforts by providing customized education, training, and other supports that focus on meeting the unique needs of employers in high-growth industries, while also focusing on boosting basic skills of the workforce pipeline.
- **Use data to identify target sectors, develop expertise in particular industries, engage employers, coordinate information and resources, and implement effective responses in each region.** BCSCs should utilize sector-driven approaches that target critical industries experiencing worker and/or skill shortages. Some regions are more sophisticated at understanding and implementing sector strategies than others and can serve as valuable resources for their colleagues.
- **Conduct an outreach strategy to employers to avoid misconceptions and to educate them about BCSC services.** While many Centers already encourage employers to come in and learn more about available services, more could be done to utilize new marketing strategies to better strengthen the relationship between employers and the BCSCs, and correct misperceptions in the community that BCSCs are focused solely on job-seekers.
- **Include training services geared to entrepreneurs and small businesses to be provided by the BCSCs.** Entrepreneur and small business services are not formally incorporated into the current model. Rather, individuals requesting these services are referred to partner organizations. In an effort to stimulate business development and support small businesses, which are the backbone of our national economy, BCSCs should work to become more responsive to the needs of this niche population by providing basic operational business training in

areas such as accounting, marketing, inventory control, costing, pricing and sales forecasting.

Infrastructure Improvements

- **Invest in internal communication systems upfront to alleviate future questions and concerns.** Clearer expectations in terms of communication protocols and selected points of contact should be clarified by LWC. One approach would be to conduct regional meetings with WIB directors, CEOs, Board Presidents, BCSCs, and CAAs so directors can clarify points of contact within the state leadership team and reiterate broad goals.
- **Gather local input in determining community needs.** Investing in a systematic approach to determine and document the level and type of needs of each region of the state would enable the LWC to develop a clear, transparent structure for monitoring outcomes and holding all BCSCs equally accountable to the goals they define for themselves.
- **Invest in enhanced IT systems to improve capacity to accurately capture data and report outcomes.** Targeted investment in improved technology procedures, tools and systems would benefit staff and customers, and facilitate the use of data for management and decision-making purposes.
- **Improve the reporting capabilities and functionality of LAVOS.** The LWC should consider surveying BCSCs to determine priorities for enhancing LAVOS capabilities. Improvements to LAVOS should be made to better manage employer relationships and job posting responses. Additional staff training on various LAVOS features and reporting functions is also needed.

Program Enhancements

- **Infuse job retention strategies throughout the service-delivery system.** It should be clear to customers that the primary goal of the BCSC is to promote long-term employment and career advancement. All teams within the service-delivery model – not only Recruitment and Placement – should prepare clients to successfully enter employment, retain it, and advance in their career. Further, the expectation that members commit to the program and actively engage in pre- and post-employment activities should be fostered.
- **Emphasize program quality, outcomes, and accountability at the BCSC level.** Directors should set targets for staff performance and regularly analyze staff efforts to meet these outcomes. This would enable Centers to measure their performance, identify program strengths and weaknesses, and implement service improvements more effectively.
- **Promote a culture of continuous learning and skill development.** Staff should be directed to help clients understand available financial aid options and

access these resources to increase opportunities for career advancement. Further, staff from each team need to encourage customers to be open to exploring alternative career paths when discussing career goals; this is especially important when serving individuals who have been laid off in declining industries.

- **Develop an approach to local oversight that supports local service delivery and rewards excellence.** WIBs and BCSCs need guidance and support in how to improve the quality of services within current resource and staffing constraints. Center Directors need to assess staff performance and outcomes on a regular basis. Examples of how other states have established clear goals, objectives and requirements are provided in the full report.
- **Connect newly employed customers to work supports and other services.** BCSCs can add great value and improve the customer experience by actively connecting members to benefits and work supports such as public health insurance, Food Stamps and utility assistance programs. Staff should also re-screen clients for benefits eligibility as key life changes occur (e.g. securing work, obtaining a raise, the birth of a child). BCSCs should continue to provide clients with tax preparation assistance to access Earned Income Tax Credits (EITCs) and other tax credits as they make progress and advance in the job market.

Expanding and Developing Partnerships

- **Build the LWC leadership and BCSC buy-in to partnering.** Each BCSC or WIB should select a dedicated staff member to steer the partnership efforts, coordinate and track activities, and communicate with stakeholders. Establishing such a coordinator will streamline communications and enable the WIB to identify trends in performance over time.
- **Ensure alignment of WIB and BCSC goals and incentives.** It is critical for WIBs and BCSCs to both be involved in the initial process of determining specific WIB *and* BCSC needs that a community partnership will address. In addition, WIBs can take steps to provide incentives to BCSCs to partner with FBCOs, such as earmarking funds for FBCO subcontracts or including CAA relationships as a required part of the BCSC's operating plan.
- **Consider incentives for partnerships.** It is important to determine incentives for both CAAs and FBCOs to reduce turf issues and disagreements over funding. By carefully crafting and delivering a message that: 1) promotes the more 'common sense' benefits of partnering; and 2) encourages collaboration by rewarding local and regional efforts to work together, the LWC can help BCSCs and CAAs reduce tensions and develop a recognition that working collectively is more effective than going it alone, especially when resources are tight in an economic downturn.
- **Tap into existing informal relationships with community groups.** BCSCs with existing ties to FBCOs should build on these relationships with the intention of formalizing roles and responsibilities, and tracking the mutual benefit of

partnering. BCSCs that do not already have FBCO relationships may need to factor in a longer timeframe for FBCO outreach and partner development.

- **Target a mix of large and small partners with varying capacities and contributions.** A collaborative effort can be enhanced by including a range of agencies in terms of size, services offered, geographic reach and capacity. Lower-capacity FBCOs can offer personalized critical services, but typically need significantly more technical assistance and training than larger, more established organizations. In addition to focusing on CAAs and larger nonprofit institutions, BCSCs should be encouraged to cultivate relationships with churches or other smaller organizations as they tend to be trusted institutions that are in tune with community needs.
- **Establish clear, realistic goals as a group.** A critical (and often overlooked) ingredient to success is identifying clear, *achievable* goals for partnerships. And it is critical to allow all partners to collectively craft goals from the outset of working together.
- **Acknowledge past unsatisfactory experience with partnerships.** While strong inter-agency relationships and informal customer referral systems to connect people to services exist between BCSCs and CAAs, there are also struggles between CSBG-funded and WIA-funded services. It is important that CAAs are acknowledged as being neighborhood-based, poverty-alleviation nonprofit organizations that offer an array of wraparound social services, and that the role of the LWC in their operations is clear.

SECTION 4: COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), administered by the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, provides states and Community Action Agencies (CAAs) with grant funding to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities. CSBG funds may be used for a variety of poverty reduction projects including the revitalization of low-income communities and the empowerment of low-income families and individuals to become fully self-sufficient.

In Louisiana, CSBG funding is administered through the LWC. According to Louisiana's Workforce Investment Plan,² the CSBG Program enables the state to directly involve Community Action Agencies with WIA and Wagner Peyser workforce development strategies and is a vital tool for addressing the workforce needs of the state. Once the LWC receives the state's federal CSBG funding, it then allocates the funds to CAAs in each region to provide poverty reduction programs and services. Data shows that Louisiana's CAAs are focusing most of their grant funds on Emergency Services (over 28 percent) and Linkages (over 21.5 percent). A relatively small amount of funding is directed to Housing (2.6 percent) or Self Sufficiency (0.36 percent).

Findings

There is skepticism on the part of both BCSCs and CAAs around creating formal partnerships due to a lack of common ground, incentives, and sound strategies in place to overcome differences in organizational cultures. While many CAAs have traditionally felt empowered to make their own decisions about resource allocation, there is also a sense that their work is not valued as much as other parts of the system. Additionally, the CAAs do not believe the LWC has an appreciation for their broader mission beyond a workforce development agenda.

Recommendations

- **Develop a strategic planning process to inform decisions on how CSBG funds are distributed or spent.** The formula for how funds are allocated needs to be updated. This will require a public hearing process to change the State Plan as outlined in federal regulations.
- **Increase discretionary funding to target state priorities.** While states are able to allocate 5 percent for discretionary grants (in Louisiana this would be about \$800,000), Louisiana holds only \$100,000 for this purpose. Additionally, there are only very general guidelines for how this \$100,000 is spent. The LWC could withhold a larger portion of new federal money until the discretionary funds held equals the five percent permitted by federal regulation. This would gradually increase discretionary funds while holding CAAs harmless – they would not see a reduction in allocations in order to build the Discretionary Fund balance.
- **Develop guidelines to better direct how CAAs conduct planning activities and operations.** The LWC could improve the needs assessment process by instructing and helping CAAs to make spending decisions based on available data. Written guidelines on how to conduct a needs assessment and data-driven decision-making should also be developed.
- **Streamline the CAA contracting process.** The LWC should review its contracting procedures and make changes to streamline the process without losing any integrity in processing. Further, if the LWC can better clarify turnaround times for reviewing contracts and responding to questions that arise, then CAAs will be in a position to better manage their own expectations.
- **Develop a comprehensive and ongoing plan of communication with CAAs.** Strategies such as regional meetings that bring together both CAAs and BCSCs, improved technology and updated printed materials would all help to improve communication.

SECTION 5: REEMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Louisiana, like the rest of the nation, has seen a significant increase in Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims as businesses cut back in the current economy. Since Hurricane Katrina, UI claimants in Louisiana have had a fully automated application process that is

completed either through an automated phone system or online. There is no in-person application process available, a system that is typical around the country.

Findings

While the UI claims system has improved the application process in some ways, it has created a new issue – increased difficulty for claimants to receive help when there is a problem with an application or to track the status of resolving issues. Although there is a call center for this purpose, it is not adequately staffed. This situation, coupled with the sheer volume of claims, has had a dramatic impact on BCSCs. It is reported that at times fully 50 percent of those coming into a BCSC are UI claimants, and many of them with claims issues needing to be resolved.

The “partial inclusion” of UI into BCSCs post-Katrina, without associated funding or systems in place to meet the needs of UI claimants, has: 1) pulled resources away from business services because there is such a high volume of UI claimants coming to centers for assistance; and 2) sent a mixed message to the community about the purpose of BCSCs, BCSCs report that their efforts to market themselves as workforce development, training and employment services is undermined by the current UI situation and they are automatically assumed to be the “unemployment office.”

Recommendations

- **Develop a short-term IT fix to allow BCSC staff to have read-only capability on the UI system.** Allowing BCSCs to view UI information could help them quickly provide basic information to claimants and guide them on next steps to be taken if an application issue is identified. Note: this recommendation has already been implemented by the LWC. Note: During the course of writing this report, the LWC made systems changes that allow BCSC staff to view UI records to help resolve issues.
- **Redefine process for serving UI applicants based on models from best practices states.** One model may not work for everyone. It is clear that urban BCSCs have very different challenges than rural BCSCs. This difference should be recognized and models may need to be developed to help each BCSC meet the needs of unemployed job-seekers.
- **Provide technical assistance to BCSCs to help them develop the model that works best for each particular area.** Overall, BCSCs would benefit from the LWC providing technical assistance to help them identify strengths, assess demands for services and develop a unique approach that considers the realities faced by each BCSC.
- **Make better use of LMI information to help job-seekers.** There is a wealth of information available through LMI data; so much so that staff may be on “information overload.” Staff would benefit from help on understanding LMI data and how to interpret data for job-seekers.

- **Review call center operations and develop a plan for improvement in both staff response and technology.** A more in-depth review of call center operations, including possible small investments in technology, would help identify a plan for improvement. The call center should consider establishing specific telephone or e-mail mechanisms to permit BCSC staff to directly reach appropriate UI staff for answers to more complex claims inquiries. Note: During the course of writing this report, the LWC took steps to review and improve call center operations.

SECTION 6: LOUISIANA REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

In 2009, the legislative Streamlining Commission made several recommendations to reorganize and modernize the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Recommendation #77 called for certain rehabilitation functions of the DCFS to be transferred to the Louisiana Workforce Commission and the Department of Health and Hospitals.³ Subsequently, the Governor's Executive budget and legislative agenda called for a reorganized DCFS framework that would transfer programs not associated with children and families to other agencies better aligned with their "core competencies."⁴ In spring 2010, the legislature transferred regulatory authority for Louisiana Rehabilitation Services' (LRS') employment-related programs from the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC). These programs included the:

- Vocational Rehabilitation Program
- Randolph-Sheppard Program
- Independent Living Part B Program
- Independent Living for Older Blind Program.⁵

Findings

Based on recommendations made by **Public Works** in a separate memorandum requested by the LWC, the LWC and LRS established seven Transition Planning Teams to focus on each component of the transfer. These teams included: Fiscal/Financial, Human Resources, Support Services, Legal, Communications, Information Technology, and Program.

The Transition Planning Teams held regularly-scheduled meetings beginning in early 2010 and developed Transition Work Plans for each team.

Recommendations

Integration of Workforce and Vocational Rehabilitation

- **Use LRS transition as an opportunity to enhance collaboration between workforce and vocational rehabilitation staff at every level.** Budget cuts in recent year have forced LRS to establish an "Order of Service" to ensure that the first priority for vocational rehabilitation services is given to the most significantly disabled. The natural tension among priority populations will make it more

important than ever that the LWC and LRS work together to maximize their resources, determine clear planning and communications channels, and develop collaboration opportunities.

- **Prioritize elements of LRS transition that will ensure compliance, minimize disruption to consumers, and ultimately improve services.** LWC and LRS leadership should immediately review the status of the transition Work Plans to ensure full and ongoing compliance with all state and federal laws and regulations (including all fiscal issues) related to vocational rehabilitation. After immediate priorities are determined, LWC and LRS should reconvene the formal Work Groups to update the full Work Plans and establish a new timeline that must be met with full and timely follow-through.
- **Develop an internal referral process for LRS clients in Groups III - V who are not currently being served by LRS, but who could be supported by the LWC.** Until LRS is again able to serve all eligible vocational rehabilitation consumers, counselors should be vigilant about making referral for consumers in Groups III – V to the services available through the BCSCs. Leadership in both the LWC and LRS must require that the regional staffs of both agencies work in tandem to deliver seamless services to “shared” customers.
- **Build upon current successes and align business outreach and engagement efforts of the LWC Business Service Representatives (BSRs) and LRS Rehabilitation Development Specialists (REDS).** LRS staff have worked hard to develop relationships with businesses and employers around the state and have a lot of good practices to share with the workforce experts at LWC. Agency leadership should arrange opportunities for LRS REDS and the LWC BSRs to work together closely and share strategies for business outreach and engagement.

Vocational Rehabilitation Funding

- **Better leverage federal Vocational Rehabilitation funding opportunities by developing more third-party agreements with other state agencies.** Funds supplied by third-parties pursuant to these agreements can be applied toward a state’s required funding match to draw down federal funds. Currently, LRS has only two third-party agreements that use in-kind match to draw federal funds. LWC should work closely with LRS leadership to explore options for intergovernmental agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) to establish third-party agreements and expand match funds that can then be approved by the federal RSA.
- **Conduct a state funding match survey of all potentially-eligible LWC, LRS, and partner agency funds.** Beyond the most immediate opportunities for leveraging federal RSA funds with the Departments of Corrections and Education, LWC and LRS should be focused longer-term on conducting a statewide assessment of other opportunities for intergovernmental agreements

and third-party collaborations. Specifically, LRS should explore possibilities with mental health or other health and human service programs. Agencies should be encouraged to think, not only about the funding streams which are *currently* used for projects, but also about their match history, availability of all interagency transfers and other funds that might be eligible to support the current projects in the future.

SECTION 7: DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICES

Perhaps one of the most challenging integration/coordination areas is that of workforce services for the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) work programs. While seemingly a “natural fit,” there are in fact, several challenges to integration that must be considered. States run the gamut on integration -- two states, Texas and Florida, have fully integrated TANF into their One Stop system – while others are on a continuum of little interaction of the programs to significant coordination short of total integration.

The most significant challenge to integration of WIA and TANF is agreement on system goals. WIA, with an emphasis on employment and training, has a strong focus on the needs of the business community. TANF goals for families, who are primarily low-skilled workers, is to become self-sufficient – helping families to not only find a job, but also to retain employment and continually strive to increase wages to a living wage.

Findings

DCFS currently operates two employment programs that could potentially be integrated into LWC – STEP and LaJET. There are many aspects of the STEP/LaJET integration work that need to be reviewed by the LWC leadership (and ultimately between the LWC and DCFS) to fully understand if and how these programs should be integrated. **Public Works** and **Seedco** participated in several meetings and conference calls with the LWC/DCFS workgroup to review these programs and to review the plan for integration. In addition, we requested separate meetings with DCFS program managers to review what processes are currently in place. These meetings were very informative and helped to better define the challenges that still need to be addressed before an integration of these programs can take place. They also highlighted, however, that there are significant issues that must be researched before work on developing an integration plan can move forward. NOTE: During the course of writing this report, the decision was made to have the LWC assume responsibility for employment and training contracts for STEP and LaJET only. DCFS will maintain all other responsibilities for the programs.

Recommendations

- **Establish a multi-year plan for integration if the ultimate goal is to consolidate programs.** The complexity of these programs, the extensive federal reporting, and intricate participation rate requirements necessitates an infrastructure be in place that will allow for the smooth transition without risk of federal sanctions.

- **Develop a thorough analysis of program participants and available resources.** There are many unanswered questions about the current resources (money and staff) that are being used to operate the STEP and LaJET programs. A thorough analysis of these factors is a first step in planning for the future. In addition, more detailed program participation data is needed in order to assess the impact on LWC. Program sites need to be assessed (e.g. which parishes have which programs) in order to understand resource levels at the local level.
- **Develop a Memorandum of Understanding to identify roles and responsibilities of the LWC and DCFS.** An MOU is necessary, not only to clearly outline how assessments will be conducted, how support services will be provided, and how non-compliance is processed, etc., but also to ensure roles and responsibilities are clear for federal drawdown of funds.
- **Review findings and lessons learned from the LaJET Pilot.** Currently, the LaJET pilot is an extremely paper-intensive operation that cannot be sustained if the program is completely integrated into LWC. In addition, there are many open questions about rules and regulations, responsibilities, and operational details that need to be addressed. Conversations with the BCSCs' staff involved in the current pilot suggest that there are successes and lessons learned about how to best serve LaJET customers. This experience needs to be fully assessed to determine the next steps in integration.
- **Develop short- and long-term IT system improvements.** As noted above, the current LaJET Pilot is extremely paper-intensive and there is no indication that there will be additional IT support to fix this or to support integration of the STEP program as well. An IT system that can support referrals, tracking participation and reporting requirements is essential.
- **Establish a planning process to engage local WIBs in planning for coordination and/or eventual consolidation.** The policy and strategic decisions that will be made in relation to the degree of integration of DCFS programs into workforce will have a dramatic impact on local operations. As LWC and DCFS clarify expectations, a planning process must be in place to involve local service delivery staff who can contribute to the discussion on how state decisions will impact local operations.
- **Develop a detailed implementation plan to customize services for STEP/LaJET customers in the BCSC system.** STEP/LaJET customers tend to be harder to serve in terms of their needs and challenges compared to the typical BCSC customer. BCSCs need training such as: 1) how front-line staff can meet the needs of hard-to-serve customers with multiple barriers to employment; and 2) how best to use local resources to tap into expertise of local community-based organizations that offer supportive services to families in need.

SECTION 8: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Historically, Louisiana has endeavored to align its workforce and economic development initiatives, and LWC leadership continues to recognize the importance of workforce and economic development collaboration as “critical to the state’s long-term economic vitality.”⁶ With the enactment of the state’s comprehensive workforce reform legislation (Act 743), Louisiana launched its new FastStart program. The FastStart program is an initiative led by Louisiana Economic Development (LED) in conjunction with the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS), and provides customized employee training to meet industry needs as a means of attracting new businesses to and expanding existing businesses in Louisiana. To date, FastStart has provided customized training for 27 companies; trained over 17,000 people; and provided customized recruiting and candidate screening for 14 companies.

Findings

LWC and LED Planning and Coordination at the Strategic Level

Both the LWC and LED are charged with supporting the growth of the state’s economy, the LWC by improving the workforce needed to sustain existing business and industry in order to stay competitive, and LED by recruiting businesses to expand or relocate to the state, which then factor into the WIC’s occupational forecast. Further, the two agencies are aligned through the LCTCS, which is their primary training provider. However, additional steps can be taken at the state strategic level to increase collaboration between LED and the LWC, such as enhancing joint strategic planning processes or developing shared views on economic development legislation. Currently, there are instances when the LWC is not advised of LED’s work to offer businesses job creation incentives and tax credits, or when job training for these businesses is being developed.

LWC Coordination with Louisiana FastStart

Louisiana FastStart has cultivated a positive relationship with the LWC offices in many local areas. For example, in Lake Charles the LWC and local BCSC worked with the FastStart team to plan and hold ConAgra Foods job fairs⁷, distribute information to job-seekers, and encourage BCSC customers to attend. They collaborated to provide the Mobile Computer Lab to assist attendees to establish email accounts and complete job applications online, which resulted in over 2,000 job-seekers attending the job fairs. There remains, however, an opportunity to enhance coordination and strategic planning among LWC and FastStart leaders at the highest levels, particularly in terms of closer strategic planning efforts between LED and the LWC at the outset of program planning.

Economic and Occupational Forecasting Systems

Act 743 clearly establishes the state’s Labor Market Information (LMI) system as the preeminent data source for Louisiana’s workforce development planning and program management, policymaking, and information sharing activities with the public, in respect to employment opportunities and training. The LWC administers the Louisiana Occupational Information System (LOIS)/Scorecard which is a virtual labor market

information web portal and interactive site that gives users access to the most recent data on Louisiana labor force, wages, population, industry employment, training schools, and training programs. LOIS also provides a scorecard for completion rates, projections, demographics, nonfarm employment, unemployment claimants, industry staffing patterns, licensed occupations, demand occupations, career products, an employer database and a youth web portal.⁸

While the LMI system was intended to drive all of the state's workforce strategies and training priorities, LED primarily uses economic data and workforce projections supplied by Moody's and Economic Modeling Specialists, Incorporated (EMSI) for a fee, even though all of EMSI's data on industry, occupation, and demographics are available online through the LOIS.

Recommendations

Enhance Strategic Planning and Collaboration between LWC and LED

While there is ad hoc communication between LED and LWC directors, currently there is no management or operational structure in place to bring the agencies together to work towards common strategic goals apart from the WIC. Additional collaborative efforts at the agency management level are needed to improve the communication, planning and implementation of programs for which multiple agencies have a role.

- **Review all state workforce and economic development planning goals, strategies and action steps to determine possible areas of coordination, conflict, and redundancy.** The LWC should first work to standardize its own internal goals and strategies. LED's strategic plan enumerates several workforce strategies and outcomes where it sees *itself* – not the LWC – as playing a lead role in “delivering turnkey workforce solutions for new and expanding businesses” in the state. Thus, the review of all workforce-related plans presents an opportunity to clarify the LWC and LED responsibilities at a strategic level.
- **Develop an interagency workforce/economic development plan that clearly establishes roles for each agency built on the Governor's priorities.** In addition to collaborative planning efforts, workforce and economic development leaders must also work together to execute such strategic plans. To accomplish this, state agencies should develop a common agenda that reflects the governor's priorities and an interagency workforce/economic plan that clearly establishes roles for the LWC and LED.
- **Prioritize cooperation between the LWC and LED on meeting the goals of the FastStart program.** A closer and more collaborative relationship at a statewide, strategic level would allow LED and the LWC to replicate FastStart successes across the state. Working closely with all state agencies *from the earliest stages* in the development of legislation or other strategic initiatives (such as developing business incentives) affecting Louisiana's workforce is critical.

- **Evaluate opportunities to pool targeted workforce and economic development funds toward common strategic goals.** States that have been successful in aligning their workforce and economic development efforts have often done so by pooling grant funding, including WIA discretionary dollars, HUD CDBG grants, and HHS TANF funds, to focus on common strategic goals. The LWC can target funds toward the goals and strategies that could be developed by a Workforce Development Cabinet Taskforce or in a joint economic plan developed by LWC, LED and other state agencies.

Alignment and Coordination of Economic and Occupational Forecasting

The LWC's Labor Market Information (LMI) system produces an extraordinary amount of economic and occupational forecasting data for Louisiana and is designed to serve the needs of policymakers in making workforce development decisions.

- **Continue to improve coordination of occupational forecasting and other economic/employment data systems that inform workforce and economic policy development.** Policymakers should understand why there is a distinction between the data currently being used by the LWC, OFC, and LED.
- **Conduct a thorough review of confidentiality issues and ways other states have resolved conflicts so that data can be used to its fullest extent.** If confidentiality is an issue, additional research should be conducted to determine ways other states have resolved such issues.
- **Develop an informational “campaign” to ensure all potential audiences are aware of the wealth of data available through LMI and how best it can be used to advance workforce and economic development goals.** While there will always be new and innovative data sources that become available, decision-makers should be familiar with the LMI system resources. LED and any other agencies who utilize external data should present their data to the OFC to provide a full context for the vast data already collected within the state. The LWC should also ensure that their ultimate products are user-friendly and meet the needs of all customers.

SECTION 9: LOUISIANA COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

In 1998, the legislature established the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS). According to its Strategic Plan, LCTCS endeavors to “deliver rapid, flexible and innovative training and instruction to address [Louisiana’s] changing workforce needs” and that its mission is “to prepare Louisiana’s citizens for improved quality of life, workforce success, and continued learning.”⁹ The WIC has spoken clearly and consistently about the importance of having a close relationship between LCTCS, the LWC and the WIC, since Act 743 aims to create “a proper alignment” of educational and other workforce development resources with Louisiana’s workforce needs, with the WIC leading these efforts. The “strategic imperatives” for better alignment of the state’s higher education resources include: creating better connections and collaboration between high schools, community and technical colleges, and universities; enhancing

the quality and amount of career information and counseling provided to students at all levels; and developing resources and elevating the status of Associate Degrees and Technical Certificates as a good pathway to high value jobs and to four-year schools.

Research has long documented the benefits of establishing cross-programmatic performance measures to focus independent agencies on priorities and common goals. Now, leading states have begun to move toward multi-tiered measurement models linked to statewide strategic goals, workforce system-building and continuous improvement. The most successful efforts have brought together collaborations of workforce and education professionals along with business representatives, other state agencies, elected officials, and community leaders as partners in the design and integration of performance measures.

In February 2010, **Public Works** submitted a detailed memorandum to the LWC describing the major costs and benefits of workforce and education performance measure integration, citing national best practices for establishing, implementing and tracking such measures (see *Attachment 5: Integrated Performance Measures – Workforce, Community and Technical College, and Higher Education*).

Findings

Planning for Louisiana Workforce Training Needs

According to LCTCS, nearly 70 percent of businesses considering moving to or expanding in Louisiana cite workforce issues among their greatest concerns.¹⁰ When describing the most immediate challenges for workforce training in the state, LCTCS often points to a training and education gap that exists today in Louisiana. To help address the workforce mismatch, the WIC's Strategic Plan identifies a goal to "align postsecondary resources with workforce needs"¹¹ and to implement strategies that "increase marketing/promotion of associate and technical programs."¹² More needs to be done by the LWC overall to move from the planning phase to actively addressing workforce pipeline issues, particularly in terms of enhancing regular communications and planning between LCTCS and the LWC staff.

Integrated Performance Measures in Workforce and Education

A WIC committee has recently been formalized to advise LWC and LCTCS on the development and implementation of integrated performance measures. The WIC has established an Interagency Workgroup on Workforce Performance Measures which is exploring ways to align education and workforce goals, objectives and measurements for performance. While some progress has been made to date, the group would benefit from additional staffing support for consistent and timely follow through needed to develop specific performance measurements.

Recommendations

Planning for Louisiana Workforce Training Needs

- **Examine current strategic goals of education, economic development and workforce development agencies to focus all efforts around common priorities.** Louisiana workforce and educational leaders (K-12, LCTCS and Regents) should work together to review all workforce-related efforts currently underway, and the LWC should be at the table when LCTCS and economic development groups (both state and local) are making decisions about workforce training.
- **Enhance interagency involvement in WIC meetings and new recommended WIC committees.** The LWC should consider ways to reengage education, economic development, and other agency stakeholders in meaningful planning with the WIC to overcome the workforce pipeline mismatches. LCTCS leadership should play a vital role in committees involved with job training. Further, new WIC committees recommended in this report could engage policymakers and bring in subject-matter experts for focused discussions on a variety of topics.
- **Appoint a senior LWC executive to lead coordination of education and workforce collaboration efforts.** An empowered leader within the LWC leadership team who is focused exclusively on interagency strategic planning *and* implementation needs to lead the charge (e.g. ensuring that integrated performance measures become a reality).
- **Continue to align regional planning efforts between LCTCS and the LWC.** The LWC should explore opportunities to partner with LCTCS and other education, economic development, and community leaders across the state to acknowledge the uniqueness of each region and understand actions already being taken to work with local partners. For example, both LCTCS and the LWC were working simultaneously to develop Career Coaching models, and staff compared these models and shared best practices. Because systems are dynamic, finding opportunities to work together is an ongoing exercise to be improved upon. The LWC should also consider ways to organize regional outreach efforts with LCTCS and state agencies.

Integrated Performance Measures in Workforce and Education

- **Prioritize the WIC Interagency Workgroup on Workforce Performance Measures and reach consensus on integrated performance measurements among education and workforce agencies and stakeholders.** The efforts of this Workgroup should continue and become a priority for the WIC so that the workgroup can assemble an initial (draft) list of performance measures. When developing integrated performance measures, the Workgroup will need to focus on: authority, simplicity, and information technology requirements.



After initial performance measures are identified, the WIC Workgroup can share the draft measures with other education and workforce stakeholders in the state to solicit input and build consensus before measures are put into place. This step will be essential to developing buy-in from those who will be responsible for producing the results that the measures are designed to capture.

CONCLUSION

The State of Louisiana is well positioned to continue to make significant improvements to its workforce development system. In the past year, the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council and the Louisiana Workforce Commission have begun the difficult task of making the governor's vision for an integrated system a reality. In the face of an unprecedented economic downturn and the recent oil spill disaster in the Gulf, the LWC has been able to maintain a focus for improvement – at every level of the system.

To enhance and focus the work already going on, the LWC engaged **Public Works** and **Seedco** to conduct an extensive review of legislation, documents, policies and procedures. We talked with numerous people throughout the system who shared their ideas, opinions, challenges and hopes for the future and completed extensive research on the current system. This analysis, coupled with ideas from around the country, form the basis for our recommendations that touch on every aspect of the workforce system in Louisiana. We also provide implementation guidelines that will help prioritize and frame future statewide efforts to help the LWC in its continuing effort to improve the workforce systems.



1. INTRODUCTION

The Louisiana Workforce Investment Council (WIC) and the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) are charged with the responsibility to oversee and manage the state's multi-agency workforce system. Together, the WIC and the LWC have established a vision – to ensure programs are aligned to high priority needs and to craft a system that readies workers with the right skills for businesses and industries growing and/or moving to Louisiana.

With the enactment of Act 743, the LWC is also charged with the responsibility to investigate the feasibility of integrating multiple workforce, training and support programs and to develop plans for both consolidation and collaboration among the various agencies and funding streams related to workforce. The LWC, with the WIC acting as an advisory body, is responsible for creating a comprehensive, integrated service delivery system that will put in place a 21st century workforce for Louisiana.

While progress has been made since the enactment of Act 743, the LWC recognizes that workforce programs are spread throughout many agencies and that some functions and funding streams need to be better aligned in order to take full advantage of available resources and to reduce duplication in the system. The LWC understands that there are opportunities to better leverage resources, reduce duplication, and increase accountability – and that Louisiana needs a strategic plan to prioritize its efforts to align these various resources.

As such, the LWC recognized the need to conduct a comprehensive review of the state's workforce system to involve key stakeholders in a highly interactive process, assess current integration plans, identify additional opportunities, as well as ensure that the best ideas from around the country are considered in planning for Louisiana.

The LWC engaged **Public Works**, and its partner Structured Employment and Economic Development Corporation (**Seedco**) – two firms with considerable experience in workforce strategic planning, policy and implementation – to review the current Louisiana workforce system, identify best practices and make recommendations on what actions Louisiana can take to increase cooperation, coordination and consolidation of workforce programs.

Public Works is one of the leading firms specializing in improving state government management, policy, and efficiency, including strategic planning with state agencies and the executive branch at the highest levels. **Public Works** provides states with professionals experienced in performance auditing, organizational development, management consulting, policy analysis, and revenue maximization.

Our senior level personnel have all served extensive tours of duty in state and local government in management and policy-making positions including former state cabinet officials, gubernatorial chiefs-of-staff, state agency directors and policy directors. As a firm, we have worked with both state agencies and governors' offices around the country. We have conducted comprehensive reviews of state operations in every



function of government, including numerous workforce and economic development systems.

For over two decades, **Seedco** has helped thousands of disadvantaged job-seekers, workers, small businesses, and communities move toward economic stability by creating and implementing model workforce development, asset building, and economic development programs in economically distressed communities. Central to **Seedco's** approach is partnering with and building the capacity of faith and community based organizations (FBCOs) and other local partners to implement large-scale initiatives. **Seedco** and its community lending subsidiary **Seedco** Financial Services currently work in 17 states and Washington, D.C., with offices in seven of those states: New York, Tennessee, Louisiana, Georgia, Maryland, Alabama, and Colorado.

Seedco's technical assistance services are rooted in its program and policy experience, providing a unique lens for understanding and addressing programmatic challenges with service delivery systems. To date, **Seedco** has assisted more than 100 foundations, government agencies, nonprofit intermediaries, service providers and FBCOs around the country. These services provide clients with strategies and tools to plan and implement projects and partnerships while developing systems to monitor and manage the success of their initiatives over time. **Seedco's** portfolio of technical assistance projects includes workshops, initiative management, curriculum development and customized, individual organizational consultations.

While this report focuses on issues and highlights opportunities to improve coordination and alignment of workforce programs, it is important to stress that the LWC and its partner agencies are building from a position of strength. The primary statutory structure and process for coordination are in place through the Workforce Investment Council and the Commission. Enactment of Act 743 placed Louisiana in the group of states who have taken steps to better integrate and manage a complex system of programs and funding sources. In addition, all those involved – staff, managers, partner agencies, local boards, Business and Career Solutions Centers, Community Action Agencies, and appointees to the WIC – are dedicated and working hard for a common purpose. Several initiatives have been introduced in the last year that hold promise and the LWC and local agencies are working hard to institutionalize the objectives of the initiatives.

As is highlighted throughout this report, there are many opportunities to improve integration, coordination, and operation of programs – including examples of collaboration and program design within Louisiana that might be considered for replication statewide. In fact, the LWC has already begun implementation of some recommendations based on their own planning activities that were also supported by the information developed over the course of this investigation. We note such activity for any recommendations where implementation has already been begun.

Following the discussion of scope and methodology, the remainder of this report is divided into major areas of investigation requested by LWC. These include:

Section 2: Organization and Structure

Section 3: Assessment of Services at the Local Level



- Section 4: Community Services Block Grant
- Section 5: Reemployment
- Section 6: Louisiana Rehabilitative Services
- Section 7: Department of Children and Family Services
- Section 8: Louisiana Economic Services
- Section 9: Louisiana Community and Technical College System
- Section 10: Summary and Conclusion

Each of these sections includes a background discussion of the current organization, identification of promising practices from around the country, analysis of current policy and operations, recommendations to be considered by the LWC as it develops a plan for moving forward, and an outline of next steps to be considered by the LWC and the WIC.

While we provide a best estimate of timeframes for implementing recommendations, these may change depending upon the LWC's decisions on priorities and resources that can be devoted to the initiatives suggested.

Finally, we would like to thank the numerous people who took time out of already busy schedules to talk with us about their work, concern for their customers, successes and frustrations, and the future of Louisiana workforce system. Without their honest and forthright discussions, this review would not have been possible.

1.1. Scope of Review and Methodology

To better integrate programs and funding streams, it is first necessary to have a comprehensive assessment of, not only the possible integration opportunities, but also the policies and operations of the current system. An effective review requires an analysis of a wide array of information, data, processes, and organizational structures.

The methodology employed in this review is one used by **Public Works** and **Seedco** in many other states. We first formulated several questions for investigation based on discussions with the LWC leadership and their articulation of the goals and objectives of the review. These included:

1. Are there opportunities for further consolidation of programs that will allow for the most efficient use of resources?
2. What activities could be undertaken to better coordinate services and to use various funding streams to complement one another and avoid duplication?
3. What best practices from other states can be applied to Louisiana?
4. What steps can be taken to help state and local agencies, service providers, community agencies, and businesses work together in a unified manner?
5. What actions can be taken to improve performance and accountability?

Because the scope of this review required an investigation of state and local service delivery policies and programs, **Public Works** and **Seedco** divided activities accordingly – **Public Works** took the lead at the state level, **Seedco** at the local service delivery level. At each level, however, a similar approach was taken. Major activities included:

- **Gathering information and reviewing documentation** that included reviewing state plans, policies, instructions and guidance provided to Business and Career Solutions Centers and CSBG providers, financial information, reports on performance and any other documentation available in the public domain.
- **Conducting interviews** – with guidance from the LWC, we identified key contacts and conducted interviews and follow-up as needed with all partner state agencies, managers and staff from Business and Career Solutions Centers, representatives from the non-profit service delivery system, business representatives and others who are part of the WIC. In all, we interviewed and interacted with a wide range of state and local staff, WIC members, and community and non-profit providers.
- **Researching best practices** in a wide variety of policy and program areas to identify successful approaches in other states and how they might be applied to Louisiana.

- **Incorporating, where appropriate, findings and lessons learned** from Seedco's own work operating large-scale workforce initiatives, integrating programs and services, managing multi-stakeholder partnerships, and **Public Works'** experience in developing major policy, statewide workforce organizational structures and advising Governors from around the country.
- **Interacting with LWC leadership frequently** to ensure communication was open and productive – reviewing progress, addressing obstacles when identified and receiving feed back as ideas were developed.
- **Attending and facilitating meetings in Louisiana** with various agencies and committees that the LWC oversees.
- **Analyzing data, organizational structures, policies, and process flows, assessing challenges to the current system** (the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico occurred as this work was progressing) and developing recommendations for both short- and long-term improvements to the system.

To complement our work to identify best practices, **Public Works** worked with the Center for State Innovation (CSI) to hold a full-day Louisiana Workforce Strategy Academy in Baton Rouge. CSI is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to bringing practitioners, experts and thought-leaders to a state to explore policy and program challenges and examples of how other states are successfully meeting these challenges.

Over 30 participants from the LWC and its partner agencies attended the Strategy Academy on March 18, 2010 to discuss such topics as: reemployment programs and coordination with workforce, workforce integration with TANF and Food Stamp work programs, CSBG integration, and vocational rehabilitation services integration. For each program area, discussion centered on innovative approaches from other states, experience (both successes and challenges encountered) in these states in integrating services, and ways funding can be integrated to achieve common goals. Background materials were also provided on these topics. The Strategy Academy provided a wealth of information and a chance for the LWC leadership and partner agencies to interact directly with policy and program experts from other states. We also engaged selected presenters in follow-up conference calls to explore topics of particular interest to the LWC in more detail.

Seedco also developed presentations and facilitated two three-hour long “supply-side meetings” with BCSC and CAA representatives. The aim of these meetings was to bring WIA and CSBG staff together to discuss regional goals, promote service integration and sector-driven strategies, and determine logistics and timeframes for BCSCs and CAAs to jointly develop regional plans. The agenda included:

- Development of Regional Teams, comprehensive plans, and linking local priorities to regional indicators to achieve outcomes.
- Sector initiatives that build worker skills and address job vacancies.



- Projected economic growth, industry competitiveness, and strategies for creating new pathways into targeted industries.
- Dissemination of lessons learned and promising practices related to regional and sector based approaches.
- Concrete next steps related to planning and partnership develop.

2. ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

2.1. Background

This section addresses the structure and organization of the Louisiana Workforce Council itself. Additional insights and recommendations concerning the LWC organization and oversight of the local service delivery areas are provided in *Section 3: Assessment of the Local Service Delivery Area*.

The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) and the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council (WIC), in their present form, were created with the enactment of Act 743 in July 2008. One of the first initiatives of the Governor, this legislation completely revamped the workforce system in Louisiana by bringing together key stakeholders in the public and private arena. The legislation intended for the Council and Commission to bring about meaningful business participation in the planning and oversight of the workforce development system – 21 of the 41 members of the WIC are business and industry representatives. The primary strategy to achieve a comprehensive, responsive, business-driven system is for the WIC to consider all possible areas for integration – either actual consolidation of programs and services or establishing cooperative agreements between partner agencies and the Louisiana Workforce Commission. The Commission is designed to advise the LWC on a wide range of ideas and insights on workforce policy and programs. Act 743 provides a comprehensive basis of authority and responsibility for the LWC to oversee the workforce system for the state and establishes the WIC as an advisory body to assist in this effort.

The WIC as it is now structured began meeting in December 2009 and meets monthly. One committee – Occupational Forecasting Conference – is mandated in legislation; an Executive Committee was also formed recently. Ad hoc committees are used for specific initiatives on a more short-term basis – currently two ad hoc committees are meeting:

- *Interagency Workgroup on Workforce Performance Measures* is exploring ways to align education and workforce goals, objectives and measurements for performance.
- *Industry-Based Certification Coordinating Committee* is working on the development of approved training and education requirements to obtain industry certifications.

The published goals of the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council (WIC) include:

- Promoting the development of a well-educated, highly skilled workforce through a comprehensive system.
- Advocating for an integrated workforce development delivery system.
- Developing strategies that will address upgrading workforce skills.

- Ensuring that resources are equitably distributed statewide.¹³

In its 2010 Strategic Plan, the WIC outlines its goals as:

- Increasing the high school graduation rate.
- Increasing the postsecondary graduation rate.
- Aligning postsecondary resources with workforce needs.
- Developing a comprehensive (demand) system that credibly forecasts and effectively communicates workforce demand and identifies priority workforce education and training needs.
- Implementing a comprehensive accountability system for workforce development results.¹⁴

Additionally, as is discussed in more detail in *Section 8: Economic Development*, the current Five-Year Strategic Plan developed by the Louisiana Economic Development (LED) seeks to address many of the state's workforce needs. These include:

- The Plan cites as one of its goals to “[l]ead efforts to retain and grow jobs and business opportunities for all Louisiana citizens by delivering turnkey workforce solutions for new and expanding businesses.”¹⁵ The Plan further lists as one of LED’s priorities to “[d]evelop robust workforce solutions.”¹⁶
- The LED Strategic Plan goes on to say that one of its objectives is to “provide strategic, integrated workforce solutions to businesses through the delivery of training...resulting in improved competitiveness in retaining existing employers and attracting new businesses to the State.”¹⁷
- Among LED’s workforce strategies are to:
 - Continue to evaluate current and future state workforce needs¹⁸
 - Develop and deliver statewide curricula to be utilized to improve the workforce for projected job growth industries¹⁹

2.2. Findings

Act 743 required state agencies to work together to build a demand-driven system that would supply the workforce Louisiana businesses need, when and where they need it. Business leaders were very supportive of the workforce reforms of Act 743 noting that finding qualified employees was one of the primary obstacles to business growth for existing companies in Louisiana and a top concern for new companies considering location in the state. Louisiana’s recent WIA State Plan outlined the extent to which business and labor leaders were key to the development and passage of Act 743. The Plan states:

The workforce development reform initiatives were crafted with significant input or support at all levels of its development from many stakeholders, chief among them being:

- **The Louisiana Association of Business and Industry.** *This organization was formed 30 years ago to unify business and industry in the state and represent them on legislative and other issues with a single voice. LABI helped identify key components of the reform plan.*
- **Blueprint Louisiana.** *This is a citizen-driven effort to identify and implement essential changes to fundamentally improve Louisiana. Blueprint Louisiana is a nonpartisan organization that is led and supported by business and community leaders from all regions of the state in hopes of better positioning the state for success and to making citizens proud to say, 'I live in Louisiana.' The Blueprint agenda contains many of the same components as the reform plan, and the organization helped generate support for it within the legislature and around the state.*
- **The AFL-CIO.** *This organization helped ensure that job-seekers' interests were furthered by the legislation and its representative participated in the signing ceremony.²⁰*

Continued collaboration between workforce and business leaders was emphasized at the inaugural meeting of the Workforce Investment Council (WIC). The major tenets of Act 743 were defined and the Council's primary objectives were identified, namely, to advise the LWC on workforce integration strategies and forecast the state's workforce priority needs so that appropriate training opportunities could be developed to meet business demand.²¹ Act 743 also emphasized the importance of the Occupational Forecasting Conference and its role in projecting the jobs and occupations to drive statewide economic development.

As with any new group, the WIC struggles with its responsibilities and capabilities in the real world as compared to the goals of Act 743 as they are written and envisioned. How can the WIC be an advisor to the LWC and help to bring about the integration envisioned in Act 743? Attendance at WIC meetings is problematic; a quorum is usually achieved though just barely. Some have commented that: it is difficult to keep members' interest when discussions are not relevant to their industry; discussions often revolve around what is best for "my sector" rather than the greater good; the construction industry is over-represented on the WIC; discussions are not forward-thinking about Louisiana workforce of the future; and discussions do not generally center around innovation and strategic issues – (looking at big picture policy and oversight of WIBs around the state and how to establish mechanisms to ensure they are high performance WIBs).

In addition to the functioning of the WIC, the LWC is attempting to focus on what structure must be in place to effectively work with partner state agencies. Prior to the enactment of Act 743, agency directors participated in a Workforce Development Cabinet Taskforce. This group consisted of the LWC, Louisiana Economic Development (LED), Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS), the Board of Regents, and the Department of Education. Other agency stakeholders such as the Department of Social Services (now the Department of Children and Family Services,

DCFS) and Department of Corrections were also involved in these cabinet-level meetings. After the passage of Act 743, this structured, Cabinet-level approach through a defined Taskforce stopped such meetings.

2.3. Recommendations

- **Reestablish the Workforce Development Cabinet.** At the present time, Louisiana has no formal, ongoing mechanism in place to foster interaction among state agencies at a level needed to ensure they are all working for common goals as established by the Governor. While the appropriate agencies are represented on the WIC, this is generally not a place where interagency issues can be resolved. In many best practice states, the Governor or his/her representative is involved in cabinet level meetings to ensure the Governor's policy and priorities are the focus of efforts and to help resolve any conflicts among the agencies. These meetings help to establish common goals and serve to ensure each partner agency is working to achieve agreed upon goals.

Oklahoma²² established a mechanism to collaborate on workforce policy and programs – the Workforce Solutions Staff Team (WSST). This group is comprised of executives from state agencies: Employment Security Commission, Department of Education, Regents for Higher Education, Rehabilitative Services, Department of Human Services, Office of the Handicapped Concerns, Community Colleges, Department of Commerce and representatives of local workforce boards. All entities involved in the group have signed a Memorandum of Understanding entitled State Commitment to a Workforce and Economic Development Partnership as a tool to focus efforts and commit resources to the collaboration effort.

- **Establish committees to engage WIC members, better use the expertise of the WIC to advise on policy and support initiatives, and increase opportunities for additional resource people to be involved in key areas.** As noted throughout best practices, states are able to extend the advisory role of their councils, engage members in rigorous discussions on policy and planning and use the council committee structure to engage additional experts and local participants in discussions. Since committees can include members who may not be a member of the WIC, this type of committee structure can engage those who are also required to carry out the policy and plans, and therefore, increases the likelihood that state policy and initiatives will be implemented.

Recommended committees as discussed with LWC leadership may include:

- Local Workforce Investment Board Oversight Committee
- Education and Job Readiness Committee
- Louisiana Workforce for Tomorrow Committee
- Disengaged Workforce Committee

- Business Engagement Committee

The Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board²³ was reorganized in 2004 with a mission to develop a strategic approach to developing Pennsylvania's next generation workforce system. The 44 member board represents business executives, labor officials, education leaders, economic development officials and local officials, as well as cabinet secretaries from five agencies and four members of the general assembly.

The full WIB meets only three times per year; the majority of work and leadership is accomplished through a strong committee structure.

Committees include:

- PA WIB Executive Committee
- Communications Committee
- Economic Competitiveness and Sustainability Committee
- Council for the Workforce of Tomorrow – which includes three subcommittees:
 - High-Level Professional Development and Support for Counselors and Teachers Subcommittee
 - Significantly Increasing Work-based Learning for More PA Youth Sub Committee
 - Building Strategies to Re-Engage Disconnected Youth Subcommittee
- High Performance Standards Review Committee
- Centers for Sector Strategies – which includes:
 - Pennsylvania Center for Health Careers Leadership Council
 - Pennsylvania Center for Advanced Manufacturing Careers Leadership Council
 - Pennsylvania Center for Green Careers

Through this committee structure, and in conjunction with the Department of Labor & Industry, Pennsylvania is implementing such initiatives as:

- Management of Industry Partnerships
- Pennsylvania Center for Health Careers
- Pennsylvania Center for Advanced Manufacturing Careers
- Pennsylvania Center for Green Careers
- Council for the Workforce of Tomorrow Policy
- Coordination of Regional Career Education Partnerships (RCEPs)
- Coordination of the Nursing Shortage Initiative

The Utah State Council on Workforce²⁴ is a 31-member (26 voting and five non-voting) board that meets four times per year. The Council focuses on review, comment and approval of work developed in committees that include:

- Operations and Performance (monitor performance and fiscal)
- Business Services and Marketing (marketing)
- Workforce Improvement and Coordination (make recommendations for long-term direction and continuous improvement)
- State Youth Council
- Regional Chairs Committee (review state and local needs)

Florida's Workforce Innovation, Inc.²⁵ is a non-profit entity that serves as the state's Workforce Investment Board. The Governor appoints board members who are charged with oversight for policy, planning, performance and accountability of the workforce system. The board is comprised of 45 members, however most work is conducted through an extensive committee structure. These include:

- Executive Committee
- Strategy Council, including Legislative Policy Committee
- Finance and Administration
- Business Competitiveness Council, including New and Emerging Markets Committee, Sustainability/Infrastructure Committee, Entrepreneurship and Small Business Committee
- Workforce Readiness and Performance Council, including Performance Committee, Technology Committee and Youth Opportunities Committee

Some additional ad hoc councils formed for special initiatives include:

- First Jobs/First Wages Council: focuses on youth and adults entering employment for the first time.
- Better Jobs/Better Wages Council: focuses on families in welfare to work and former welfare recipients working in low-wage jobs.
- High Skills/High Wages Council: focuses on experienced workers through education and training efforts to place them in high-paying, high-skill jobs and to attract employers that hire these types of workers (comprised entirely of business representatives).

New Mexico has gone through several iterations of board structure to address evolving workforce requirements and planning. In 2007, the Governor appointed a 39-member State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) that meets six times per year. The committee structure for the SWDB includes:

- Business Services
- Performance Monitoring
- Carl Perkins Committee
- One-Stop Coordination Committee
- Coordination and Oversight Committee.

The key committee, established through an Executive Order, is the Coordination and Oversight Committee (COC) that is charged with

bringing together the secretaries from the Departments of Economic Development, Labor, Workforce, Human Services, Public Education, Higher Education, and Children, Youth and Families with representatives from labor, business and the legislature. The COC is a workgroup that reports to the SWDB and has:

- Developed strategic goals for both statewide and regional employment growth and training in New Mexico;”
- Incorporated secondary education plans to address those strategic goals;
- Worked with statewide and regional business and other partners to create career pathways so that curriculum is aligned with economic development goals
- Developed a career clusters system to guide economic development and career pathways to identify education and training programs to produce high-quality workers for the clusters.
- Selected a brand name and logo for initiatives – “Work in New Mexico”
- Created a career resource guidebook and website to assist job-seekers, students, employment and career counselors and employers with basic information about career opportunities in the cluster sectors, resources available to help pay for education and training, and projected job growth;
- Developed training for front-line workers to provide accurate and appropriate information about the new “Work in New Mexico” products and services

Michigan’s²⁶ 73 member, business-led Council for Labor and Economic Growth (CLEG) was formed in 2004 and serves as the states WIA governing board. The board meets four times per year and operates through a committee structure that includes:

- Executive Committee
- Tackling Major Workforce Issues Facing Key Industry Sectors Committee: This group looks at key industry sectors and works to develop strategies to ensure employers have a trained workforce.
- Increasing Michigan’s Global Competitiveness Committee: This group works to assess Michigan’s global competitiveness standing and to identify strategies to increase opportunities in the global market.
- Increasing Educational Attainment Committee: This group is charged with reviewing all educational policies and programs related to workforce and making recommendations for improvement.
- Accelerating Re-Employment/Workforce System Committee: This group develops strategies to accelerate a return to work for workers who are unemployed.
- Creating a Low-Wage Worker Advancement Strategy Committee: This committee develops strategies to increase the transition of

low-skilled, low-wage, entry-level workers to higher paying, sustainable jobs.

- Creating a Culture of Entrepreneurs Committee: This group looks at ways to position workers and companies to support entrepreneurship activities.
- Work Readiness Credential Committee: This group is working to design and implement the Michigan National Career Readiness Certificate Program based on WorkKeys® as well as looking at other educational credentials and alignments.

Oklahoma²⁷ established the Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development (GCWED) to emphasize the Governor’s plan to use the state’s workforce system as an economic development tool. The GCWED is a 49-member board, meeting the requirements mandated by the WIA, but also including representatives of the states industry clusters as identified by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. Local boards are encouraged to mirror the state approach and make local board appointments representative of regional clusters.

The Council has two standing committees and five teams. Standing committees include:

- Executive Committee
- Oversight Committee

Teams are chaired by a private sector representative and staffed by agencies as indicated below:

- Research and Data: Department of Commerce and Employment Security
- Education and Lifelong Learning: Career Technical and State Regents
- Outreach and Engagement: Department of Commerce and local WIB’s
- Governance and Best Practices: Employment Security and Workforce and Oklahoma Employment and Training Association

Oregon’s Workforce Investment Board²⁸ is a 25 member board that meets four times per year. The Board conducts much of its business through various standing and ad hoc committees such as:

- Executive Committee
- Communications Committee
- Youth and Education Committee
- Healthcare Initiative
- Green Jobs Council
- Energy Sector Partnership

- Service Delivery Committee
- Policy Committee
- Future of the Workforce System Committee

- **Establish more capacity within the LWC to staff key initiatives through the appointment of a Strategic Initiatives Work Group.** The LWC is faced with many challenges: there continues to be an increasing demand for services in every program for which the LWC is responsible; budgets are being reduced; integration of LRS into the LWC is a major undertaking (increasing the LWC by about one-third); leadership turnover has required the appointment of new people who need time to fully engage; and new approaches to working with the Business and Career Solutions Centers have been introduced but not fully implemented. The LWC needs a management structure that can devote needed time to the details of implementation in order to oversee implementation and ensure follow through.

One way for the LWC to expand its ability to manage key initiatives is to establish a team of highly-motivated staff who can be “pulled” from around the agency to form a Strategic Initiatives Work Group. This group would be able to expand the capacity of senior managers and be able to manage the details of implementation of projects important to the LWC.

2.4. Implementation Guidelines

Task	Responsible Office	Activity	Timeframe		
			1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Work with the Governor’s Office to establish a Workforce Development Cabinet	Executive Director’s Office	Strategic Planning	✓		
Work with the WIC to establish committee structure	WIC Director	Strategic Planning	✓		
Launch a planning process, in conjunction with appropriate WIC committee and representatives from local WIBs/BCSCs, to develop local performance objectives, reporting, monitoring plan and publishing of results	WIC Director	Strategic Planning		✓	
Identify staff to form a Strategic Initiatives Work Group	Executive Director’s Office	Operations	✓		

3. ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

3.1. Background

Passed by Congress in 1998 to address the challenges of maintaining a competitive national workforce in an increasingly global economy, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) provides federal funding for workforce development initiatives nationwide. WIA is a demand-driven policy focused on meeting the labor supply needs of businesses with trained and skilled job-seekers, thus growing businesses and retaining existing and creating new job opportunities. The dual goals of workforce development are to provide the talent and skills employers need to produce and deliver goods and services, as well as raise living standards of working families in America. To achieve these goals, states need to:

- Understand local labor markets and determine strategies to serve both employers and workers;
- Give job-seekers and workers effective counseling and access to appropriate training to enable them to earn family-sustaining wages; and
- Assure that funds spent on workforce and economic development efforts are spent wisely.

WIA gives state and local governments the primary responsibility for implementing all programs and mandates a central role for business led decision-making. Under WIA, every local workforce investment area (LWIA) has a Workforce Investment Board (WIB) that oversees the use of WIA funds. WIBs have broad latitude in determining local workforce development policies and act effectively as a "Board of Directors" for the LWIA. Further, WIBs require that 51 percent of Board membership, including the chair, be representative of the employer community. Nationwide there are approximately 650 state and local WIBs. There are 18 WIBs across Louisiana.

As the local oversight bodies responsible for serving employers, workers and job-seekers, Louisiana WIBs have the opportunity and responsibility to establish policies that will shape the delivery of services to each customer, most specifically through the Business and Career Solutions Center (BCSC) system. WIBs are tasked with responding to the needs of their local labor market by targeting efforts both on the needs and talents of area workers and area employers. This "dual customer approach" is a successful strategy in workforce development transformation as practitioners strive to strengthen employment and financial outcomes for economically disadvantaged individuals. While employers and job-seekers must be treated as *equal* customers in the workforce development system under WIA, many employers still maintain a negative view of state workforce systems:

- In a *Jobs for the Future* survey of employers actively working with public employment and training systems, fewer than half responded that the local WIBs engaged local employers in meaningful ways and just half said they



would recommend their local One-Stop Center as a valuable resource to other employers. Thus, employer involvement in planning and decision-making is critical to the success of demand-driven systems in Louisiana as well as the rest of the country.

Many states have made significant progress establishing a state vision for workforce development, as well as developing oversight and incentive systems to drive local workforce boards to higher performance and alignment with the state's vision. In general, these states:

- Involve local WIBs in the development of strategies as they are discussed and planned at the state level.
- Test strategies through pilot programs first before full implementation.
- Reward local performance through additional grants for capacity building.
- Provide non-monetary incentives such as reducing the intensity of monitoring in exchange for meaningful performance measures.

In 2009-2010, Louisiana allocated **\$76,659,249²⁹** in funding to support its Business and Career Solutions Center (BCSC) system. In addition to WIA funds, states received an additional \$1 billion in funding as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) to support workforce efforts. Consistent with the intent of the Recovery Act, states and eligible entities were directed to focus ARRA funding on activities to preserve and create jobs to promote economic recovery and provide assistance to those most affected by the recession. Louisiana's funding was allocated as follows³⁰:

2009-2010 WIA Funding

- Adult: \$17,329,943
- Dislocated Workers: \$ 7,458,565
- Youth: \$19,592,763
- **Total: \$44,381,271**

2009-2010 ARRA Funding

- Adult: \$ 7,397,797
- Dislocated Workers: \$ 7,867,751
- Youth: \$17,010,430
- **Total: \$32,277,978**

Total WIA and ARRA Funding Allocated Statewide

Region	LWIB	WIA	ARRA	Total	Total/ Region
1	10	2,528,439	1,221,802	3,750,241	\$20,349,716
	11	3,622,249	2,589,130	6,211,379	
	12	6,320,343	3,802,908	10,123,251	
	14	1,504,368	1,120,477	2,624,845	
2	20	4,887,992	3,299,845	8,187,837	\$12,448,476
	21	3,932,527	3,328,112	4,460,639	
3	31	1,078,413	749,291	1,827,704	\$1,827,704
4	40	3,289,803	2,687,945	5,977,748	\$7,664,049
	41	967,302	718,999	1,686,301	
5	50	1,019,232	710,245	1,729,477	\$4,300,661
	51	1,508,209	1,062,975	2,571,184	
6	60	1,450,726	1,092,154	2,542,880	\$4,353,659
	61	1,021,573	789,206	1,810,779	
7	70	3,137,538	2,726,308	5,863,846	\$12,089,477
	71	3,632,918	2,592,713	6,225,631	
8	81	1,628,669	1,572,389	3,201,058	\$8,265,507
	82	1,278,268	1,042,314	2,320,582	
	83	1,572,702	1,171,165	2,743,867	

The BCSC Service Delivery Model

In 2006, the state developed and implemented a new service-delivery model for the BCSC system to: (1) become more demand-driven and employer focused to meet the needs of local businesses; (2) better coordinate service offerings and provide more systematic, streamlined approaches to meet the needs of customers; and (3) improve performance outcomes and the quality of services through integrated service-delivery strategies. Using the theme “engage, empower, employ,” the BCSCs functionally realigned staff into three teams. Each team was designed to have a mix of WIA and Wagner Peyser staff to leverage the strengths of state and local perspectives at each BCSC, while also developing a more customer-driven culture in terms of operations. The teams and their specific functions are:

1. **Member Services** (“engage”): greets customers on arrival, determines eligibility and registers individuals as members of the LWC system. Members are placed in different categories depending on their service needs: Employment Express

- (ready to work and experienced in the type of job they are seeking), Career Advancement (job upgrades, career change), and Career Development (disconnected from labor market, need intensive services). Once enrolled, members are escorted to the Training and Skills Development team for services.
2. **Training and Skills Development** (“empower”): helps members build resumes, conduct job search activities, access support services, and connect to training and education. Once job-ready, members are escorted to the Recruitment and Placement team to discuss employment opportunities.
 3. **Recruitment and Placement** (“employ”): connects job-ready members to open positions with employers in the area and manages business relationships to ensure employer satisfaction. The team works closely with Business Service Representatives (BSRs) throughout the state to identify new business opportunities and connect businesses to On-the-Job Training and other BCSC relevant BCSC services. Businesses receive different levels of service depending on factors, such as: geography, targeted sectors, number of job openings available, wage levels, benefits and advancement opportunities in the company, and customer status.

In addition to the above teams there are 11 BSRs that work to cultivate and support employer relationships statewide, in partnership with Recruitment and Placement staff at BCSCs. In some regions there are actual Business Services teams that contribute to business development, while other areas (primarily rural) do not currently have a BSR working with the BCSC.

3.2. Findings

The BCSC system has significant strengths to build on in terms of service-delivery and has experienced considerable success to date connecting job-seekers to training and employment, as well as meeting the workforce demands of local employers. Conversations with BCSC staff suggest that most agree that **the model itself is sound** and that BCSC members on the whole are better served as a result of the systems that have been put in place since 2006. Strengths identified statewide include:

- Staff express a deep commitment to serving their communities, resilience in enduring changes on multiple fronts, and a willingness to try new ideas to overcome barriers to success.
- Directors and front-line staff alike have a genuine desire to identify new solutions and make improvements; they are open to recommendations and eager for guidance on how they can be more effective.
- There is a tremendous amount of experience and knowledge in the field (many BCSC staff have 15-30 years of experience), which has helped the system to remain relatively stable during times of transition. Further, there is a desire to

share information and partner more effectively with the LWC and other stakeholders to build institutional knowledge.

- The BCSCs and WIBs expressed confidence in the LWC leadership's intentions to reorganize and streamline internal systems and are optimistic that challenges can be alleviated once specific strategies are identified and implemented.
- Most BCSCs and WIBs have relationships with the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) partners, other state agencies, and larger nonprofits such as Goodwill, Catholic Charities, or their local CAAs, but the depth of these relationships vary considerably (personal relationships tend to drive these partnerships). Staff generally rely on their own individual contacts and informal relationships with local Faith-Based and Community Organizations (FBCOs) and Community Action Agencies (CAAs) to refer members for additional services.

Notwithstanding these strengths, the model's potential for success has been compromised by the following factors:

Increasing Demand and Diminishing Resources

- The statewide hiring freeze over the past three years has prevented BCSCs from filling many empty positions. This has often led to the reassignment of staff into roles for which they do not necessarily have the appropriate skills or experience. It has also resulted in many Centers having a greater percentage of WIA-funded as opposed to Wagner Peyser-funded staff, sometimes resulting in a shift away from employer-focused strategies.
- Turnover in LWC leadership has created some confusion about primary points of contact for BCSCs and resulted in communications bottlenecks. Messaging about LWC goals, priorities, and strategies has not always been clear and consistent. Additionally, the centralized nature of the current structure minimizes the inclusion of local perspectives in system-wide decision-making.
- The economic downturn, coupled with funding cuts in WIA, has resulted in severe reductions in operating budgets for many Centers. While ARRA funds have compensated in part for these reductions, this funding is temporary and once it is exhausted, many BCSCs will likely be forced to make further workforce reductions. This will come at a time when the need and demand for services are expected to increase due to the impact of the recent oil spill in the Gulf.
- Staff report the need for additional support and guidance from the state and local WIBs to strategically cope with funding cuts, hiring freezes, and other system constraints, including the large volume of UI claimants coming into Centers (note: for further discussion of UI and Re-employment recommendations, please see *Section 6: Re-Employment Services*). Immediate investments in improving communication systems by the LWC leadership would assist in alleviating confusion, misinformation and frustration.

Confusion Regarding the Model

- It is unclear if functional realignment has been fully embraced. For example, although co-location of WIA and Wagner Peyser staff has occurred in some Centers, staff sometimes continue to work in silos or do not develop a true team approach.
- Confusion remains about the importance of BCSC certification and the repercussions of failing to adhere to certification standards. In some cases, concern about losing certification has limited the ability to be flexible and creative in model implementation or there is a lack of understanding about how the model can be adapted on a practical level. There is also a general lack of understanding about when evaluation for certification is conducted or what the process actually entails.

Technology Shortcomings

- Overall, existing technology infrastructure used by BCSCs is outdated and prone to crashes, significantly reducing the amount of time staff has to spend with customers.
- The same information must be tracked in two separate systems according to WIA and Wagner Peyser funding streams, respectively. This causes inefficiencies and duplication of efforts and presents barriers to the integrated team-based philosophy of the model.
- While most BCSCs are comfortable with LAVOS, it appears that many CAAs frequently track outcomes by hand and keep large paper files that are hard to analyze and share, or use antiquated software and hardware systems. This limits the capacity of staff and the LWC to share data, conduct thorough data analysis and measure outcomes.

3.3. Recommendations

Assessment of the service-delivery system and related recommendations (as well as implementation guidelines) are grouped into the following categories:

- A. Staff Training Investments
- B. Demand-driven Approaches to Customer Service
- C. Infrastructure Improvements
- D. Program Enhancements
- E. Expanding and Developing Partnerships

A. Staff Training Investments

Directors and staff across BCSCs concurred that training and professional development is critical to ensuring that they are able to provide quality services to increasing numbers of clients. As such, it is recommended that statewide systems be developed to facilitate:

1. Regularly scheduled training and re-training on roles, responsibilities, and best practices;
2. Cross-training between staff within teams *and* across teams to encourage efficiencies and retain institutional knowledge; and
3. Additional opportunities for BCSCs across the state to come together to brainstorm on successes and challenges, share lessons learned, and determine more creative, innovative approaches to meeting the workforce needs of Louisiana.
4. A clear point of contact at LWC, or the development of a Training Unit within the Office of Workforce Development that handles training and technical assistance requests, develops statewide training calendars, and generally facilitates professional development opportunities for all levels of BCSC staff (and WIB members, as needed).

Specific training recommendations include:

- **Retrain BCSC staff to ensure uniform understanding of the model, and establish regular train-the-trainer sessions for each region.** Generally, BCSC Directors are experienced professionals who understand the model and its goals. However, initial training for mid-level managers and frontline staff on the model was limited. Additionally, significant staff turnover and reassignment, coupled with changes in the model since 2006, have resulted in the need for all Center staff to participate in refresher training.
 - Investing in regular regional training sessions, potentially spearheaded by FLAT representatives or WIBs, would provide increased opportunities for BCSC staff to come together and regroup around regional goals. This would also help to ensure that Centers receive the baseline support needed, particularly when both WIA and Wagner Peyser staff are included in identifying training needs.
 - Written guidelines (coupled with technical assistance, where needed) that provide clear instructions for how to creatively design service delivery within the requirements of the model would help to address the concern that the model is overly process-oriented. This would also enable each BCSC to develop their own policies and methods for implementing team functions within a framework defined by the LWC, while ensuring that Centers continue to meet certification.

- **Encourage local flexibility in service implementation efforts and develop customized training and/or technical assistance for rural and urban regions.** Once training is provided to all BCSC staff on the model itself, attention should be paid to providing specific Centers/regions with the additional support needed to overcome specific challenges. For example, urban and rural areas tend to have different experiences in terms of managing customer volume, connecting members to services, and determining business engagement strategies. The state is very diverse in terms of industry, poverty levels, environment, politics, and on-the-ground partnerships. These variances should be taken into consideration as the model is implemented on a practical level. Examples of locally-driven challenges that could be addressed through more individualized training include:
 - Urban areas face increasing numbers of customers coming through the door who are in crisis (this will likely worsen in southern regions that are more directly affected by the oil spill) with fewer staff and resources to meet growing demand.
 - There is a perception that the model was designed primarily with urban Centers in mind, minimizing the needs of rural Centers. Rural BCSCs that have small staffs need customized guidance around how to implement the model when they do not have the capacity to develop actual ‘teams.’

The LWC can work to counter negative perceptions by offering a training/technical assistance schedule that can be equally accessed by staff from all regions of the state, sending the message that professional development is a statewide priority. Offering a mix of training opportunities that are rotated throughout different locations across the state can equally benefit all Centers. This approach would help reduce travel time for staff in rural areas who are typically required to travel several hours to Baton Rouge to access professional development. Additionally, Centers that have successfully addressed challenges (e.g. regions affected by a plant closure resulting in significant layoffs) should have opportunities to share their own best practices through training/technical assistance; in turn, this information can be brought back to LWC leadership to inform continuous program improvements.

- Investing in distance learning technology should be explored to enable BCSCs to more easily learn from each other by sharing ideas remotely, and reducing the number of in-person meetings staff attend. The state should also consider the use of online tools and networking systems so staff can communicate in real time to ask questions, post resources, and brainstorm electronically.

Many states, including **Virginia, Iowa, and Wisconsin** have created Twitter and Facebook accounts for increased access to staffers and job-seekers. In addition, Massachusetts authors “Job Blogs” to provide current information and a forum for job-related programs, services, activities, and events happening across the state.³¹

The **US Conference of Mayors** recently released a white paper outlining recommendations for the upcoming reauthorization of WIA. In their recommendations, they stressed the inherent need for a workforce system that is guided by local control as a necessary allowance to support a business-driven approach to workforce development. A successful system would 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 and regional trends and sectors.³²

- **Invest in cross-training efforts within each BCSC.** The state-mandated hiring freeze often results in directors reassigning staff in less than optimal ways when someone resigns. If numerous resignations happen in one department, staff can be reassigned to duties with which they have limited experience. If a staff person tasked with administrative duties resigns, others are often required to pick up the administrative work informally. While the service-delivery model calls for BCSCs to set aside professional development time for staff, this does not seem to occur consistently, due in large part to the volume of members. Cross training within the three teams at each Center is critical, but additional one-on-one supports should also be considered for areas that appear to be the most challenging. Cross training on topics such as staff qualifications and responsibilities, coaching practices, goal-setting, time management, refining shared definitions of job readiness, and setting priorities could result in the following improvements:
 - Staff would have a better understanding of how to allocate time between meeting the needs of WIA customers and UI claimants; staff would be better able to incorporate a demand-driven approach; inconsistencies with labeling individuals as job-ready would be alleviated; and frustration with being unable to provide the kind of one-on-one support to members on a consistent basis would be reduced.
 - Additional guidance around staff qualification requirements might encourage BCSCs to identify more experienced staff and reassign staff more strategically. Given the turnover at most Centers and projection of upcoming retirements due to the aging workforce, specific support to assist the system in retaining staff (e.g. supervisory training or mentorship initiatives with more senior BCSC workers) may also improve service-delivery quality.

Also, training and ongoing support for management staff around supervision, managing time, balancing program requirements, managing performance-based contracts, and dealing with work-related stress would be useful.

- **Clarify roles and responsibilities of Recruitment and Placement teams and Business Services Representatives.** Because Recruitment and Placement teams have received limited training on their roles and responsibilities when the model was first launched, they could benefit greatly from more structured guidance. In theory, the model articulates that BSRs (and in some areas, Business Service teams) are tasked with building employer relationships and selling the OJT program to businesses. The vision is that once these relationships are established, BSRs/Business Service teams and the Recruitment and Placement staff will co-manage employer relationships going forward, with local staff taking the lead in cultivating relationships over the long-run. But, in practice, there are inconsistencies in how BSRs interact with Recruitment and Placement teams, and concerns about the effectiveness of BSRs that are stretched thin (the number of BSRs has dropped from 40 to 11 within the past three years). While some regions have teams of BSRs that support business outreach efforts, others do not have a designated BSR or Business Services team on which they can rely. Further, there are inconsistencies statewide in terms of how closely Recruitment and Placement staff work with BSRs and the effectiveness of these coordinated efforts. Confusion about who is ultimately responsible for maintaining existing employer relationships and cultivating new relationships could be alleviated through additional training. Other specific training focuses for BSRs, Business Services teams and Recruitment and Placement staff should include:
 - **Use of LMI Data:** Staff has been provided with tools from the LWC such as labor market data, but rising volume of customers coupled with reductions in funding/staff, leaves little time for learning how to use such tools to more effectively provide services. Assistance for staff in how to interpret and apply data to their work would be extremely helpful. Further, LMI data does not match up with other sources or may be dated. For example, construction may be noted as a “high growth” sector for a region, but UI rolls show high numbers of recently unemployed individuals in this sector. Such contradictions can make staff reluctant to use labor market data on a regular basis.
 - **Information on Best Practices and Successful Strategies:** Regular mechanisms to share best practices related to job development and employment engagement techniques, as well as basic information about sector-driven strategies and how these work on the ground should be implemented.
 - **Placement Tracking:** While a focus on high-demand industries is important, it should not come at the expense of staff focusing time and energy on quality employers that fall outside of these targeted occupations. This could be alleviated by helping staff better track

employer outcomes for all placements, even if not in high-growth/high-demand occupations

Training-related Implementation Guidelines

Task	Responsible Office	Activity	Timeframe		
			1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Create a Training Unit within the Office of Workforce Development, and/or determine primary point of contact at LWC for all training-related questions and requests.	WD Office	Training	✓		
Alert WIBs and FLAT committee representatives that they will be tasked with leading regional professional development efforts to decentralize training demands (or identify other entities that the LWC chooses to spearhead efforts).	WD Office	Training	✓		
Survey BCSCs to gather ideas on 1) how Centers can be more flexible with implementing the model, and 2) training/technical assistance needs.	WD Office	Operations	✓		
Develop quarterly/bi-annual training calendar for BCSCs (blend of statewide and regional offerings). Priorities include 1) retraining on the model 2) building the capacity of staff to become more demand-driven in their work.	WD Office	Training	✓		
Develop written guidelines and instructions for how BCSCs can re-think service delivery approaches while still meeting certification standards.	WD Office	Technical Assistance		✓	
Begin holding centralized statewide professional development ‘conferences’ as well as locally-driven workshops and trainings within each region.	WD Office	Training		✓	
Provide one-on-one technical assistance to help BCSCs learn from each other, overcome internal issues that affect efficiency/quality, and cross-train staff.	WD Office	Technical Assistance		✓	
Implement train-the-trainer sessions with BSRs and BCSC Recruitment and Placement teams to build job development skills of staff and relationships with other business-serving entities in communities.	Program Integration Manager	Training		✓	
Research distance learning technology and social networking systems to determine if they can have a positive impact for the state.	IT Office	IT			✓

Develop comprehensive job development guidelines for the Recruitment and Placement team that specify: resources to identify potential employers; purpose and focus of initial and ongoing letters, email/phone communications with prospective employers; how to attract employers to BCSC programs; and long-term business engagement strategies.

WD Office

Operations



B. Demand-driven approaches to customer service

States across the country are shifting from supply-driven workforce development models that focus primarily on job-seeker needs to dual customer approaches that address the distinct needs of both job-seekers and businesses to strengthen local economies. By placing a greater emphasis on job development and business services, BCSCs will be better positioned to design a sustainable workforce pipeline that anticipates and reflects the employment needs of industry clusters and develops strategies to resolve gaps between supply and demand in both the short- and long-run. As such, it is recommended that statewide service-delivery systems be enhanced to:

1. Build the capacity of the Recruitment and Placement team and Business Services Representatives (BSRs) to perform high-quality job development activities, initiate and maintain ongoing relationships with business and industry representatives, and better promote BCSC services that prepare members for placement;
2. Supplement secondary labor market data with information attained through direct relationships with employers in industries experiencing high-demand for labor to identify target sectors, and implement associated sector strategies based on data and conversations with businesses; and
3. Bolster regional economic competitiveness by engaging additional economic development experts in workforce issues and aligning education, economic, and workforce development planning.

Specific recommendations related to helping the BCSC system become increasingly demand-driven include:

- **Prioritize employers as primary customers of the system and increase the capacity of Recruitment and Placement teams and BSRs to perform job development duties.** BCSC directors and staff are often limited in business services they can provide due to the high volume of jobseekers and UI claimants that come to the Centers. Directors must often reallocate resources dedicated to cultivating employer relationships to the Membership and/or Skills Development teams. While the Recruitment and Placement teams were created to supplement the limited number of BSRs, many directors have had to reassign Recruitment

and Placement staff from job development duties to also assist with meeting the needs of job-seekers. Further, the reduction of BSR representatives across the state has further hampered the ability of the BCSCs to cultivate relationships with new employers.

While some Centers provide high-quality employer services, opportunities should be generated across the system to transition all Centers beyond crisis-driven activities. Recruitment and Placement teams and BSRs should be empowered to adopt more strategic, business-minded, proactive and thoughtful approaches to creating employment opportunities in their local communities. This can be achieved, in part, by ensuring that directors prioritize the use of limited resources to maximize the business services arm of the model. This requires Centers to invest in cultivating relationships with new employers who are interested in using business services to source candidates and prepare them for open jobs and then connect these employees to training; in doing so, BCSCs will be more likely to alleviate the needs of job-seekers while actively engaging employers.

- The LWC may want to consider tapping into local WIBs and asking them to help local BCSCs become more strategically demand-driven, build employer relationships, and “sell” the merits of services available to businesses at the Centers.
- Assessments of current job-development capacity at Centers should include an in-depth look at current job development processes used, key staff involved with employer relations, documents maintained, and available resources or programs (such as on-the-job training) to identify, attract, cultivate, and maintain relationships with potential employers.
- By developing comprehensive job development guidelines for the Recruitment and Placement team to follow, the state can better ensure that staff have adequate resources to understand and implement best practices for engaging employers. These guidelines should describe a job development process that includes: (1) the resources staff have available to identify potential employers; (2) suggestions about the purpose and focus of initial and ongoing letters, email and phone communications with prospective employers; (3) how to initially get employers to the table; and (4) long-term engagement strategies for keeping employers connected to BCSCs after their initial needs have been met.
- **Build a talent pipeline made up of properly educated, skilled, and prepared job-seekers who are available to compete in local and regional economies.** Louisiana is experiencing a significant “skills gap” that prevents current businesses from thriving. This can lead to employers relocating to other states as well as deterring new businesses from locating to Louisiana. Although the state has a lower unemployment rate than others during this economic downturn, many unemployed and underemployed workers in the state lack the skills, training and education necessary to be productive in the current labor market.

BCSC staff report that job-seekers often require general interventions and education, such as GED assistance, remedial reading and math, and soft skills training, prior to accessing more specialized skills development opportunities.

There are opportunities throughout the state to improve partnerships with employers, unions, workforce investment boards, adult basic education providers, community action agencies, community-based organizations, community and technical colleges and other institutions of higher education, and other training and service providers. Engaging these partners in a consistent and strategic manner would complement BCSC efforts by providing customized education, training, and other supports that focus on meeting the unique needs of employers in high-growth industries, while also focusing on boosting basic skills of the workforce pipeline.

- **Use data to identify target sectors, develop expertise in particular industries, engage employers, coordinate information and resources, and implement effective responses in each region.** BCSCs should utilize sector-driven approaches that target critical industries experiencing worker and/or skill shortages. Some regions are more sophisticated at understanding and implementing sector strategies than others and can serve as valuable resources for their colleagues. Locally-driven sector strategies have led to successes in other states facing similar challenges.

Pennsylvania³³:

Pennsylvania recognized the need to engage local WIBs and energize them to seek innovative solutions to local challenges and capitalize on local opportunities. The state established a system of High Performance Standards for local WIBs and communicated clear expectations for local WIBs to meet the standards. The overall expectation is that high performing local WIBs will be strategic, collaborative, well-informed, and set realistic, focused objectives. The standards challenge the local WIBs to:

- Analyze regional labor market data and use the data to inform local policy and investments.
- Invest resources to address skills and career ladders in High Priority Occupations.
- Actively organize and support industry partnerships in key targeted clusters.
- Produce a clear, strategic direction that aligns regional resources.
- Produce an integrated business services plan that ensures outreach to employers, identification of employment opportunities and posting opportunities to PA CareerLink system.
- Ensure PA CareerLinks is accessible to employers and job-seekers.

- Establish a youth strategy that is aligned with regional labor market analysis.
- Maintain sound financial practices, develop budgets with Board input and ensure spending is aligned with strategic direction.
- Ensure compliance with the PA Performance Management Plan.
- Ensure there is a structure, staff and funds to carry out its oversight.

Massachusetts³⁴

Massachusetts has established a technical assistance approach to helping local WIBs meet high performing standards. The state has set expectations that boards will work to achieve standards, and the state's workforce agency is focused on supporting them in those efforts. Priorities are to: build capacity, close skill gaps (both for job-seekers and board capacity), and enhance the youth pipeline. Expectations include:

- Requiring local boards to develop a comprehensive regional plan based on labor market data.
- Requiring local boards to design and meet strategic goals, effective business practices and customer-focused practices.
- Leveraging additional resources at the regional level through partnerships.
- Requiring evidence of regional business partnerships, services for special populations and youth services.
- Aligning board membership with strategic objectives, including requiring active participation of members and continuous quality improvement practices to keep board focused on goals.

In **Massachusetts**, the state focused on the healthcare industry and worked to address the direct care worker needs of long-term care and reduce the nursing shortage. The state invested in systems that build the skills of workers to qualify for healthcare-related occupations, and then connected them to careers within this high-growth field.

Massachusetts also prioritized the workforce needs of manufacturing, biotechnology, financial services, and other industries through the BEST and BayStateWorks initiatives.³⁵

Georgia and Oklahoma

Georgia was the first state, Oklahoma followed, and others are now considering establishing the Certified Work Ready Communities program. Such a designation identifies a local area (county or region) as one that has made a commitment to improving high school graduation rates and increasing the number of workers who have obtained a Work Ready Certificate such as WorkKeys®. This works to promote the community as having a skilled and talented workforce ready to meet the demands of any new and/or growing businesses.

Local teams were established to include economic development, government agencies and education. Local areas were given three years to reach the goals enabling them to be designated Work Ready though achieving the status in less time is rewarded with additional grant money. Once the designation is achieved, it must be maintained and renewed every three years. Local areas are given additional grant funds, free membership in their local Chamber of Commerce and additional funds for outreach materials. Communities are permitted to post road signs and use a seal denoting that they are a Work Ready Community and the year they achieved certification.

Oklahoma has used their Certified Work Ready Community designation to help local areas gain a competitive advantage over other non-certified communities because they can quantify that their workforce is skilled in terms that are understandable and acceptable to employers. As an example, Oklahoma cites a small community in Northeast Oklahoma that could show a highly skilled and certified workforce as a deciding factor for Google and Gatorade to locate in that community. The community has placed a priority on work readiness and life-long learning, and improving high school graduation which helped convince Google and Gatorade that this community was right for them.

Washington and Oregon:

Washington and Oregon have established a model that puts the responsibility of mobilizing stakeholders on local agencies, industry associations, unions, workforce boards and educational institutions. These stakeholders not only participate fully in local needs assessments, but also plan for and oversee implementation of sector initiatives that come out of the planning process. Using the Skills Panel model as the mechanism to foster partnerships around industries vital to the state, these states are able to focus local participants to lead initiatives, be innovative and find solutions relevant to local needs. Skills Panels recommend new training programs and ensure training is strategically focused on current and emerging industry needs, thus helping the industries stay competitive. The panels have also effectively leveraged private resources from employers who see value in the work of the panels in helping them to stay competitive.

In 2008-2009, under directives from the LWC, the BCSCs developed regional plans in an effort to become a part of the Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) initiative.³⁶ An assessment of the regional plans and proposal development process revealed the following key issues:

- In some cases, a BCSC representative was responsible for developing a plan for an entire region without securing buy-in from others or having the expertise necessary to select and justifying appropriate approaches.
- While target sectors were identified, key stakeholders, such as business and local chambers of commerce were not consulted in regards to high demand sectors and on-the-ground opportunities in the area.
- There was a limited use of data to inform the process for selecting target sectors. Instead, in some regions, 'buzz' sectors, were selected even though there may have not been a demand in that particular region (for example, selecting health care as a target sector when there are no hospitals or clinics in the area).

For these reasons, there is generally a mismatch between the plans and actual demand in each region. A fundamental component of a demand-driven workforce investment system is the integration and application of the best available federal, state and local workforce information including, economic data, labor market information, census data, private sources of workforce information produced by trade associations, educational data, job vacancy surveys, transactional data from job boards, and information obtained directly from businesses. As such, the BCSCs should work closely with the LWC, WIBs, WIC, chambers, and LED - each of whom have access to business intelligence and a unique perspective on the business community - to discuss regional needs, select relevant target sectors, build on each others' successes and coordinate local efforts, and implement strategies to accurately address current and future needs.

Sector-based strategies were also highlighted in the WIA reauthorization recommendations by the US Conference of Mayors. Focused on collaboration between employers, education, organized labor, economic development and workforce intermediaries to develop targeted workforce solutions, sector-based initiatives have exhibited successful, measurable results with strong performance outcomes benefitting both job-seekers and industry employers.³⁷

- **Conduct an outreach strategy to employers to avoid misconceptions and to educate them about BCSC services.** There is agreement amongst the BCSCs that there is a need for additional employer-facing marketing materials to entice businesses to utilize Center services. Recruitment and Placement teams, BSRs, and BCSC directors should work closely with their local WIB to create an information packet to use in the field to attract new employers that details: (1) the benefits of utilizing BCSC business services, such as recruitment and screening services; (2) sample pre-employment for job-seekers (focus on team work, customer service, work ethic, time management, etc.); (3) business-centric client success stories that demonstrate concrete, powerful results to businesses; and

(4) selected high quality job-seeker resumes that speak to the array of talent which employers can access through the BCSCs. Such materials would enable employers to quickly assess the business services offered by the BCSCs, as well as the pool of potential employees.

Additionally, directors should invite employers to attend business-related presentations, provide feedback on curricula for trainings, tour the facilities, use Center space for group interviews and job fairs, and in some cases interact directly with job-seekers. While many Centers report they already encourage employers to come in and learn more about services and space available, more could be done to utilize new marketing strategies to better strengthen the relationship between employers and the BCSCs, and correct misperceptions in the community that BCSCs are focused solely on job-seekers.

As employers become more comfortable conducting business with their local BCSC and accepting referred job candidates that lead to placements, they will be more likely to spread positive word-of-mouth and return for services. Moreover, this will result in the greater community becoming more aware of the business and training services offered by BCSCs, thereby recruiting new business partners. BCSCs in Regions 4 and 6 have had tremendous success in employer engagement through actively communicating the value of services provided for business and implementing marketing techniques to target businesses. This expertise should be shared across the system so that other regions that are struggling to engage employers can learn about and use similar best practices. Further, the LWC may want to consider establishing incentive programs to reward regions that demonstrate investments in improving employer services or effective sector-driven strategies. By leveraging a wider variety of business supports, regions that do not currently have BSRs or strong Recruitment and Placement teams will be better served.

- As mentioned previously in the Training Investments section, implementing train-the-trainer sessions with BSRs and BCSC Recruitment and Placement teams will help build job development skills of staff so they can be more demand-driven in their efforts.

In addition, outreach to state and local elected officials is necessary in order to educate policymakers on the importance and value of investment in the public workforce system. One-on-one meetings and visits to the Centers provide an opportunity to showcase the valuable work being done on behalf of job-seekers, incumbent workers, and local businesses. Showcasing the system's successful programs and strategies will increase visibility and garner support for state and local workforce initiatives.

- **Add training services geared to entrepreneurs and small businesses to the portfolio of services provided by the BCSCs.** Entrepreneur and small business services are not formally incorporated into the current model. Currently, BCSCs typically refer individuals requesting these services to partner organizations. In an effort to stimulate business development and support small

businesses, which are the backbone of our national economy, BCSCs should work to become more responsive to the needs of this niche population.

Start-up entrepreneurs often need basic operational business training in areas such as accounting, marketing, inventory control, costing, pricing and sales forecasting. Once entrepreneurs receive such training and support, they have an increased probability of remaining in business, a greater ability to grow their businesses and employ more workers. More mature small businesses face different constraints as they look for expansion, growth, and profitability opportunities and may look to the BCSCs for strategic training and guidance, particularly training that is specific to their industry. Providing such support to help businesses in different stages of the entrepreneurial cycle is important, particularly because these employers will potentially take advantage of other lines of service as well, such as recruitment and placement services.

Demand-driven Implementation Guidelines

Task	Responsible Office	Activity	Timeframe		
			1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Direct WIBs to determine approaches for how to take a more active role in supporting employer relationship-building efforts at BSCSs. Establish incentive programs to reward regions that demonstrate investments in improving employer services or effective sector-driven strategies.	WD Office	Strategic Planning	✓		
Assess job development capacity of each Center.	Program Integration Manager	Operations		✓	
Determine statewide/regional strategies to better market BCSC facilities and resources to employers. Ensure Centers have an adequate supply of marketing materials.	Program Integration Manager	Operations		✓	
Develop an entrepreneur start-up check list to help BCSC staff provide information about key aspects of starting a business in Louisiana (choosing a business structure, registering a business, permits and licenses needed, and how to obtain them).	WD Office	Technical Assistance		✓	
Develop comprehensive job development guidelines for Recruitment and Placement teams and BSRs to utilize.	Program Integration Manager	Technical Assistance			✓

C. Infrastructure Improvements

The LWC can better position itself for long-term success by assessing and upgrading various infrastructure systems to support statewide efforts around strong workforce outcomes. Better systems will improve BCSCs' capacity to expand services, create efficiencies over the long-run, and allow staff to have an even greater impact on the work they are doing on a day-to-day basis. Recommended infrastructure enhancements that support the BCSC system include:

- Improving internal communications structures;
- Including more BCSC staff in the planning and decision-making processes;
- Ensuring computer hardware and software are not outdated and functioning properly; and
- Investing in retraining new and existing staff on revised procedures and systems.

Specific recommendations related to infrastructure improvements include:

- **Invest in internal communication systems upfront to alleviate future questions and concerns.** Clearer expectations in terms of communication protocols and selected points of contact should be considered by LWC. At the June 2010 FLAT meeting, LWC leadership announced that they will be meeting with WIB directors, CEOs, and Board Presidents to discuss the direction the state is heading; this message was well-received by FLAT members. The LWC should consider holding similar meetings in each region with BCSCs (and CAAs) so directors can clarify points of contact within the state leadership team and reiterate broad goals. This would also help to relay the message that the LWC is committed to improving communication with BCSCs, and to better articulate the rationale behind decision-making.
 - Simple changes such as updating contact lists, confirming that meeting invitations are sent to the right individuals, and sharing details about how representatives are selected for committees (such as the FLAT) would reassure local stakeholders.
 - Investments in online tools to share key information, including message boards and intranet systems, should also be considered. Such tools (when frequently updated to reflect 'live' information) can save time and energy. Posting meeting minutes for WIBs, the FLAT, the WIC, and other committee meetings on the LWC website would also enhance transparency.
- **Gather local input in determining community needs.** Investing in a systematic approach to determine and document the level and type of needs of each region of the state would enable the LWC to develop a clear, transparent structure for monitoring outcomes and holding all BCSCs equally accountable to the goals they define for themselves.

- Involve local staff in discussions about how policies will be implemented, and then carefully track and report on outcomes in a timely way.
- Build internal LWC capacity to assess local efforts, rather than determine them. Enabling BCSCs (and CAAs) to define the needs of their own communities using an easy-to-understand, uniform structure, and then rewarding them for their achievements in meeting these needs, would garner more acceptance of monitoring by the LWC.
- **Invest in enhanced IT systems to improve capacity to accurately capture data and report outcomes.** BCSC staff often does not have the IT expertise to trouble-shoot or manage IT-related issues when they arise, and existing IT support is stretched thin. The lack of IT support can result in the delay of service provision when problems arise, leading to frustration for both staff and customers. Targeted investment in improved technology procedures, tools and systems would benefit staff and customers, and facilitate the use of data for management and decision-making purposes. For example, by compiling data in a useful, standard format and location, directors, front-line staff and LWC leadership will be able to quickly and regularly assess Center performance.
 - Statewide strategies for staff to better serve UI claimants should be developed (see section on CSBG for more information regarding challenges around UI data and services).
 - BCSCs should consider courting college students or other interns studying computer science to provide system support or regular professional development to staff so that Centers increase their IT trouble-shooting skills and build internal computer literacy (e.g. train staff on short-cut functions).
 - Consider streamlining LWC forms to better capture WIA and Wagner Peyser information to save time and effort when reporting outcomes.
- **Improve the reporting capabilities and functionality of LAVOS.** The LAVOS system can be cumbersome to navigate and few BCSCs appear to use any supplemental data-capturing systems. Improvements to LAVOS should be made to better manage employer relationships and job posting responses; the LWC should consider surveying BCSCs to determine priorities for enhancing LAVOS reporting capabilities. Additional staff training on LAVOS features and reporting functions is also needed. Questions and concerns regarding the accuracy of the data in LAVOS include:
 - Updates do not appear to be reaching every office and performance goals do not produce accurate information.
 - Job-seekers are not required to enter their social security numbers when they access the system remotely, resulting in clients having multiple LAVOS accounts and making it difficult to track services provided.

- There is a loophole in the LAVOS system that allows candidates to apply directly for positions for which they may not be qualified. This can strain relationships with employers who must then sift through a diluted applicant pool, limiting their interest in engaging in other BCSC employer services.
- It can be confusing to navigate the home page and identify the areas that pertain to the specific needs of job-seekers, and businesses, and there are areas where information could be displayed differently to alleviate confusion and save time.

Despite these issues, there is general agreement that improvements to LAVOS would be better than implementing a completely new system. LAVOS needs to be revised to transmit data more seamlessly to DSFC's data system. Automated reporting functions should be developed to provide individual staff members, BSCS directors, WIBs, and LWC staff with simple outcomes snapshots that can be used to identify trends and compare performance between staff members, BSCS's, and regions. If these functions cannot be added, the LWC should conduct a needs assessment and environmental scan, to inform a possible change in the IT system. The LWC should not consider replacing LAVOS with another fully-customized, proprietary system, but instead utilize a database system that has been proven in another state. At a minimum, the database should incorporate case management functionality; the flexibility to transmit data between Unemployment Insurance offices, STEP and LaJET programs, and other state agencies; and automated reporting functions for staff, management, and state oversight. At a minimum, BCSCs should be encouraged to solicit help from interns to clean records and remove duplication of files within LAVOS.

Michigan:

- **Common customers are identified, and duplication of services is avoided.** Michigan's Career Education Program, which was brought into the state workforce agency, developed a new MIS based on the One-Stop Career Center MIS. **Michigan Works**, the Career Centers' MIS, includes multiple partner programs. The state is developing the system's ability to interface with other systems, such as TANF.
- **Data Warehouse.** Michigan has ambitions to build a pre-K through 20 data warehouse to improve its entire educational system. Although there are plans to include employment data, these will be the last added to a system that is at the early stages of development, and has thus far focused only on K-12.

Florida is currently developing a web-based One-Stop Management Information System that will integrate all workforce programs, as well

as financial and program data, including employer services, under one application.³⁸

Infrastructure-related Implementation Guidelines

Task	Responsible Office	Activity	Timeframe		
			1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Send out mass email/letter from LWC leadership articulating goals and clarifying points of contact within LWC. Then make calls to WIBs and BCSC directors to articulate new communication processes (including turnaround times for getting questions answered by LWC), confirm contact information, and answer questions.	WD Office	Operations			
Develop “cheat sheet” for BCSCs to use to navigate points of contact within LWC’s Baton Rouge offices.	WD Office	Operations			
Clarify process for selecting FLAT representatives to explain why certain individuals were selected to be on that committee. Consider creating subcommittees within FLAT to include more individuals and better reflect balance of WIA and Wagner Peyser staff.	WD Office	Operations			
Streamline forms to better capture WIA and Wagner Peyser information in one place to save time and effort for reporting outcomes.	WD Office	Operations			
Provide regular professional development to staff to increase their IT trouble-shooting skills and build internal computer literacy.	WD Office	IT			
Reassess IT support to see how BCSCs can receive more timely assistance when systems crash and to ensure accuracy of records in LAVOS.	WD Office	IT			

Assess how information is presented to employers logging into LAVOS and survey BCSCs to determine reporting needs; ensure employers understand that they need to contact BCSCs to get candidate screening services. Add features that quickly note when a candidate is applying on their own compared to a BCSC staff referral.	IT Office	IT	
Create a quick reference LAVOS Desk Guide for front-line staff to reference when entering information into the system or running reports.	IT Office	IT	
Make enhancements to LAVOS so that the system better directs users' to job-seeker versus employer services; create new methods to track customer loyalty (e.g. employers that come to events are not captured in LAVOS).	IT Office	IT	
Invest in new computers for BCSCs with particularly old hardware; identify software needs for CAAs.	IT Office	IT	

D. Program Enhancements

While the BCSC model is sound on multiple fronts, there are opportunities to improve the service-delivery system. By offering comprehensive, integrated workforce development coupled with asset building services, and strengthening both pre-employment and post-employment strategies, BCSCs can provide customers with a deeper array of services to better address the range of issues that disadvantaged workers and struggling job-seekers face. Additionally, by investing in program enhancements strategically, staff will be better positioned to create the foundation for potential career advancement and/or work support services for customers that may not be accessing these types of services or succeeding within the current system. Specific recommendations related to BCSC programmatic enhancements are detailed below.

- Infuse job retention strategies throughout the service-delivery system.** BCSCs can better express their commitment to fostering long-term self-sufficiency and economic mobility of low-income workers when they work with each individual customer in a number of ways. For instance, there may be an opportunity to introduce retention services during the orientation period. It should be clear to customers that the primary goal of the BCSC is to promote long-term employment and career advancement. All teams within the service-delivery model – not only Recruitment and Placement – should prepare clients to successfully enter employment, retain it, and advance in their career. The Membership team, therefore, should emphasize to clients from Day One that the BCSC system is focused on retention, not just placement or unemployment insurance. Further, the expectation that members commit to the program and

actively engage in pre- *and* post-employment activities should be fostered. Other job retention recommendations include:

- Staff should be made fully aware of how seemingly unrelated efforts may directly contribute to outcomes. For example, an administrative clerk may not realize that data entry inaccuracies can contribute to the undercounting of placements, and how that can negatively reflect on a particular Center. When staff are better attuned to how they directly make a difference in the goals of the Center, and in the lives of the people they serve, morale and a commitment to “do better” often result.
- While staff may already explain to customers that they are required to stay in contact with the BCSC to provide documentation, and report employment-related successes (and challenges), customers need to understand that this is not only for reporting purposes, but also so that they can be connected to future opportunities that may arise.
- **Emphasize program quality, outcomes, and accountability at the BCSC level.** Performance management is a critical component of workforce development and asset programs. One strategy that some Centers are using to track the impact of their efforts (including at **Seedco’s** own Career Center in New York City) is to link individual staff evaluations and work plans to contract performance. For example, each Skills Development staff member could have a work plan that connects their daily activities to an established goal (e.g. helping 75 percent of their clients achieve skills upgrades). It is the responsibility of Directors to set these targets for staff performance and regularly analyze staff efforts to meet these outcomes. This allows Centers to measure their performance, identify program strengths and weaknesses, and implement service improvements.
 - At least one BCSC in Region 1 has had tremendous success assigning specific performance targets to staff members and checking in on a regular basis to ensure progress is being made, and if not, identifying the challenges and potential solutions to overcome obstacles.
 - All levels of staff should be informed of Center outcomes (even those staff who do not necessarily feel that their job is directly tied to placements or retention) so that they have the opportunity to weigh in on how services could be enhanced. Holding regular, data-driven check-ins with frontline staff sends the message that leadership values their opinions, and is paying close attention to services provided.
- **Promote a culture of continuous learning and skill development.** Lifelong learning is essential to meeting the changing demands of today’s labor market. To succeed in the new economy, customers must commit to continually upgrading their knowledge and skill sets. It is the responsibility of BCSCs to help clients understand how education and skills training can affect future earnings and advancement. Staff should be directed to help clients understand available

financial aid options (e.g., Pell Grants) and access these resources to increase opportunities for career advancement. Further, all staff need to encourage customers to be open to exploring alternative career paths when discussing career goals; this is especially important when serving individuals who have been laid off in declining industries.

BCSCs should be better able to offer skills upgrade training that is linked to established and recognized credentials and/or college credit, because this is strongly tied to attaining better jobs and career pathways. If the BCSC is unable to provide these trainings itself, linkages with local training providers and systems to track the effectiveness of referrals should be established.

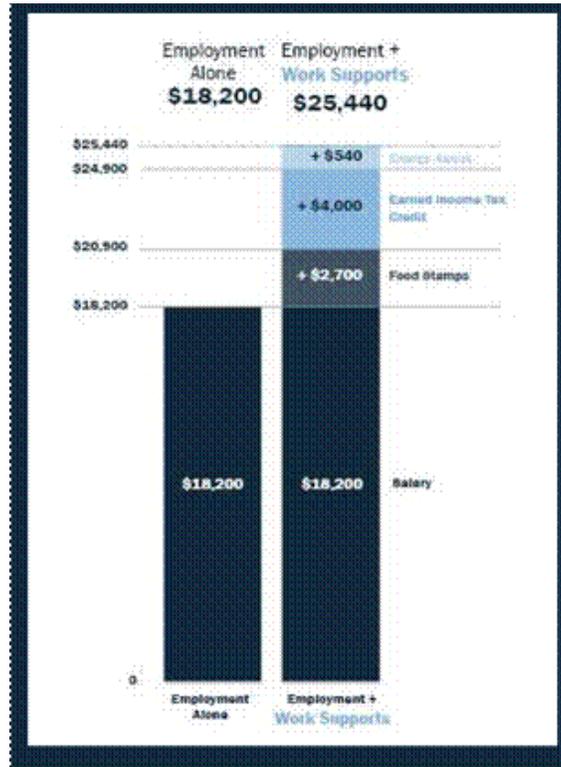
BCSCs should be encouraged to reach out to working customers and host events to actively engage employed clients through activities such as: holding alumni nights, recognition nights/graduation ceremonies to celebrate milestones such six months on the job, workshops on employment trends, financial management/wealth building seminars, mentoring, workshops on opening a bank account, or time management workshops. Documenting concrete examples of success stories such as these can be very effective in 'selling' the merit of BCSCs to job-seekers or employers.

- **Develop an approach to local oversight that supports local service delivery and rewards excellence.** While there is a genuine desire on the part of BCSC staff to provide better quality services to customers, they need guidance and support in how to do so under current resource and staffing constraints. Some BCSCs need more support than others to generate efficiencies and improve quality. It is therefore important that the LWC work with WIBs and other committees to build the capacity of Center managers to assess staff performance and achieve outcomes on a regular basis. Regardless of the mechanisms, the WIC and the LWC ultimately choose – Certified Work Ready Communities, Centers of Excellence, Skill Panels or something unique to Louisiana – clear goals, objectives and requirements should be defined. Such a system can better track progress, identify obstacles and reward highly-performing regions through additional grants from discretionary funds and non-monetary rewards such as reduced intensity of monitoring. This type of structure not only rewards excellence, it can also be a mechanism for the LWC to target limited resources to help regions who are not performing as well to reach the same levels of excellence.
 - By training staff on how to provide tools such as the Work Readiness Credential to assess skills of job-seekers, BCSCs will be more likely to provide quality services compared to the amount of time and resources it takes to offer one-on-one case management and in-depth customer assessments. The LWC can promote new ideas for improving quality while also alleviating frustration for frontline staff who struggle to meet the needs of many customers by determining ways for Centers to implement the philosophy of one-on-one support in more small-group settings using techniques such as coaching practices, mentoring, and workshops.

- The BCSC program model requires clear systems for communication, coordination, and tracking services/outcomes between staff. Directors should create structures that encourage constant dialogue regarding customer services, such as case conferencing meetings and team problem solving. While it is understandable that it can be difficult to find the time for regular check-ins with staff, weekly team meetings/trainings should be implemented as a strategy for improving long-term outcomes. During these meetings, staff should report on progress in meeting contract targets, strategies to engage special populations, such as youth and UI claimants, and weekly priorities and goals.
- **Connect newly employed customers to work supports and other services:** It appears that limited focus is currently put on connecting members to public benefits or asset-building services. Oftentimes, wages alone are not enough to meet the needs of low-income working families. Job-seekers as well as workers in entry-level positions often need additional assistance to supplement their wages to make ends meet. BCSCs can add great value and improve the customer experience by actively connecting members to benefits and work supports such as public health insurance, Food Stamps and utility assistance programs. Staff should also re-screen clients for benefits eligibility as key life changes occur (e.g. securing work, obtaining a raise, the birth of a child). BCSCs should also continue to provide clients with tax preparation assistance to access Earned Income Tax Credits (EITCs) and other tax credits as they make progress and advance in the job market.

Seedco's EarnBenefits program is a proven way to connect job-seekers and workers to such benefits. This web-based technology tool not only "calculates" the benefits amounts individuals and households are eligible for, but facilitates access to these benefits by providing streamlined application assistance along with case management services. **Seedco** currently operates EarnBenefits in seven states: New York, Tennessee, Maryland, Georgia, Oklahoma, Connecticut and Kentucky. To test the effectiveness of this strategy, **Seedco** analyzed performance outcomes in 2006-2007 and found that those receiving a minimum of one benefit were 42 percent more likely to achieve three-month job retention and 33 percent more likely to achieve six-month job retention than clients who received no *EarnBenefits* services. Research shows that when former welfare recipients and other chronically unemployed individuals are able to maintain continuous employment for six months, their long-term connection to the labor market is greatly enhanced.

The following illustration shows the impact work supports have in helping a family close the gap between low earnings and expenses. A single mother with two children living in New York who is earning \$10/hr adds \$7,240 annually to her financial resources through accessing work supports.



- o Financial coaching can also play an important role in facilitating asset building among low-income families, whereas stand-alone financial products or short-term financial training programs tend not to be enough for families to build savings and accumulate substantial assets. Saving money requires planning, self-restraint, and confidence in one's own decisions, responsible spending, and strategic debt management practices. These activities can be intimidating for customers who have had little success managing their finances or for those who have never accessed mainstream financial institutions. With coaching and support over time, individuals are more likely to make informed decisions about spending, saving, borrowing, and investing.³⁹

Programmatic-related Implementation Guidelines

Task	Responsible Office	Activity	Timeframe		
			1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Encourage BCSC directors to carve out time for staff to meet regularly to discuss service planning activities, communication, coordination, and tracking services/outcomes between teams.	WD Office	Operations	✓		
Help BCSCs assess systems for offering skills upgrade training to customers that is linked to established and recognized credentials and/or college credit. If the BCSC is unable to provide these trainings itself, partnerships with local training providers should be developed and referrals tracked..	WD Office	Strategic Planning	✓		
Analyze current client flow at BCSCs to identify existing gaps in retention service delivery and identify areas to infuse or enhance job-seeker retention services. Consider implementing a benefits access approach such as <i>EarnBenefits</i> .	WD Office	Operations		✓	
Identify re-engagement strategies for customers successfully placed into jobs to keep them connected to the BCSC.	WD Office	Operations		✓	

E. Expanding and Developing Partnerships

Since the initial implementation of WIA, local systems across the nation have leveraged partnerships with multiple stakeholders, enabling local areas to bring additional resources to the workforce system, strengthening it and providing comprehensive, cohesive services to jobseekers. Partnerships, while sometimes difficult to launch and shepherd, can result in numerous positive performance-related gains for BCSCs, and frequently lead to new funding opportunities, resource-sharing around programmatic common ground, expansion of goodwill between agencies, positive press, and new, innovative initiatives that otherwise would not be feasible.

In Louisiana, a number of BCSCs currently partner with faith-based and community organizations, CAAs, government agencies and social service providers. These partnerships could be further developed to support WIA outcomes and local economic development. States that develop the capacity to leverage multiple stakeholders and

support collaborative approaches toward achieving common goals are often better positioned to: (1) meet the complex and interconnected needs of their communities; and (2) create systems that generate internal efficiencies and improved outcomes for partners.

It is important to note that partnerships can appear deceptively simple, but strong partnership development takes sustained commitment to relationship-building on multiple fronts. Further, there are varying degrees of success in establishing or maintaining partnerships that lead to better outcomes; these successes depend on a number of approaches that the LWC should consider when working to promote collaborative approaches in Louisiana. The following recommendations take into account the array of positive outcomes to which partnerships with CAAs and FBCOs can lead to, when given careful attention and support.

- **Build the LWC leadership and BCSC buy-in to partnering.** Commitment and support from the LWC leadership, WIBs, BCSC directors, and frontline staff, are critical to successful partnerships. The LWC should be particularly aware of the importance of cultivating the buy-in of frontline staff that may be hesitant to changes, and perhaps more importantly, to securing the BCSC leadership's commitment to working with CAAs and FBCOs over the long run. Each BCSC or WIB should select a dedicated staff member to steer the partnership effort, coordinate and track activities, and communicate with stakeholders. Establishing such a coordinator will streamline communications and enable the WIB to identify trends in performance over time.
 - Local WIBs ideally can play a key role in statewide partnership development efforts by aligning/leveraging resources, convening partners, translating partner feedback into program design, and sharing best practices and innovation.
- **Ensure alignment of WIB and BCSC goals and incentives.** WIBs and BCSC operators do not always have the same goals and incentives, which can complicate the partnership process. For instance, a WIB may want to engage CAAs/FBCOs in the BCSC system in order to meet the needs of more hard-to-serve clients, improve community relations, and/or tap into new pools of customers. BCSCs, on the other hand, may be more concerned with operational issues and may not see a clear benefit to the partnership in terms of lessening of staff workloads or meeting specific performance goals tied to payment from the WIB. Therefore, it is critical for WIBs and BCSCs to both be involved in the initial process of determining specific WIB *and* BCSC needs that a community partnership will address. In addition, WIBs can take steps to incentivize BCSCs to partner with FBCOs, such as earmarking funds for FBCO sub-contracts or including CAA relationships as a required part of the BCSC's operating plan.
 - Encourage WIBs to come together regionally to work together on broader goals that partnerships can support. Local WIBs can ideally play a key role in partnership development by aligning/leveraging resources, convening partners, translating partner feedback into program design,

and sharing best practices and innovation.⁴⁰ WIBs should have flexibility to determine partners (mandated and non-mandated) that are appropriate to each area's strategic plan and BCSC system.

Additionally, it is important to note that changes in WIB/BCSC leadership, staff and/or priorities can hamper the progress of partnerships. For example, a new executive director or change in organizational strategy may derail or negatively impact efforts to develop partnerships, especially if the new leadership lacks commitment to the partnership strategy. On the other hand, organizational or leadership changes can also have positive effects on partnerships, particularly if the shifts includes a greater commitment to community collaboration or if new staff brings with them strong CAA/FBCO relationships.

- **Consider incentives for partnerships.** The benefits of partnerships, especially in a non-financial relationship, for agencies that are already stretched thin are not always clear. It is therefore important to determine incentives for both CAAs and FBCOs to reduce turf issues and battles over funding. By carefully crafting and delivering a message that: (1) promotes the more 'common sense' benefits of partnering; and (2) encourages collaboration by rewarding local and regional efforts to work together, the LWC can help BCSCs and CAAs reduce tensions and develop a recognition that working collectively is more effective than going it alone. If the LWC encourages WIBs to take a leadership role in cultivating partnerships, this approach can help ensure that WIA and CSBG perspectives are reflected on agendas. Community colleges, FBCOs, employers, training providers, and other engaged stakeholders may also want to attend such meetings (regularly or by invitation, depending on the situation).
 - Before engaging in a formalized partner selection process, WIBs and BCSCs should take stock of the financial and in-kind resources they can offer prospective candidates, and develop expectations for partners. Particular attention should be paid to assessing FBCO/CAA needs and interests and structuring partnerships in a way that responds to everyone's needs as much as possible. Early impressions that the partnership will benefit one partner more than others can lead to disinterest or mistrust. Offering compensation for services or small grants or other arrangements for FBCOs and CAAs to utilize BCSC space for meetings or workshops are gestures of goodwill that can encourage partnership.
 - FBCOs/CAAs tend to be appreciative of letters of support for grant proposals, or in opportunities to collaborate in pursuing funding. Because many BCSCs in Louisiana already have such informal relationships, it may be less challenging to bring partnerships to the next level. Financial incentives or performance-based contracts between partners provides considerable structure and motivation to work together, but also requires training, monitoring and ongoing support.

For regions targeting healthcare as a high-growth industry, the **National Fund**, which supports sector-based partnerships across the country, could be an important resource for Louisiana. The National Fund has a healthcare focus in almost all funded areas and promotes employer-driven partnerships (other partners are secondary), which is relevant for Louisiana as it works to become more demand-driven in its approaches to working with businesses. The National Fund also structures Funding Collaboratives, such as the **Central Iowa Works (CIW)** partnership in the Des Moines area and the **Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network** in Ohio:

- The National Fund, Greater Des Moines Partnership, Des Moines Area Community College (also the One-Stop operator), Iowa Works, United Way of Central Iowa, and ISED Ventures/Annie E. Casey Foundation came together to develop CIW.⁴¹ This partnership aims to connect workers to jobs through sector-specific strategies, and alleviate the worker and skills shortage in central Iowa in eight industry sectors. Prior to the development of CIW, workforce agencies were working in silos and there were no real systems in place for stakeholders to work together toward common goals.
 - The Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network is an unprecedented partnership formed to serve as a regional coordinating entity for the workforce development system. Building off of the collaborative efforts of GO Cincinnati, Agenda 360, Vision 2015, and Better Together Cincinnati, local stakeholders launched the Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network in 2008 to serve as a regional workforce development intermediary for the Greater Cincinnati region. The Network consists of philanthropic funders, local and state government agencies, employers, chambers of commerce, secondary and post-secondary educational institutions, service providers, and workforce investment boards in the tri-state region. Any organization involved in workforce development in the region is invited to participate in the Network. The Network meets regularly to provide guidance and input.
- **Tap into informal existing relationships with community groups.** BCSCs with existing ties to FBCOs should build on these relationships with the intention of formalizing roles and responsibilities, and tracking the mutual benefit of partnering. BCSCs that do not already have FBCO relationships may need to factor in a longer timeframe for FBCO outreach and partner development. In addition to securing internal buy-in around partnership efforts on the part of BCSCs, it is important to carefully assess interest and commitment levels from potential partners.

Additionally, the partnership development process should be structured in such a way as to ensure buy-in from both FBCO frontline staff and leadership. Absent support from leadership to prioritize the project, frontline staff may be unable to fully support a partnership. All staff need to understand the big picture goal or benefit of the project and their role in achieving that goal.

- **Target a mix of large and small partners with varying capacities and contributions.** One factor that can aid the success of a partnership is including a range of agencies in terms of size, services offered, geographic reach and capacity. Lower-capacity FBCOs can offer personalized critical services, but typically need significantly more technical assistance and training than larger, more established organizations. In addition to relationships with CAAs and larger nonprofit institutions, BCSCs should be encouraged to cultivate relationships with churches or other smaller organizations.
- **Establish clear, realistic goals as a group.** No one wants to partner just for the sake of partnering. A critical (but often overlooked) ingredient to success is identifying clear, *achievable* goals for partnerships. The most successful BCSC/FBCO/CAA collaborations are structured to meet the specific needs of all partners. When outcomes or objectives are too broad, parties may not understand their value in the partnership, or doubt that anything will be accomplished. Conversely, if the goals are narrow or appear too self-serving to any single entity, it may be difficult to find appropriate and/or willing partners. Thus, it is critical to allow all partners to collectively craft goals from the outset of working together.
 - Once goals are agreed upon and partners understand each others' service offerings, the next step is to clarify roles and responsibilities and mobilize partners to develop a realistic, outcome-driven plan of action. The partnership will also need to determine processes and procedures for tracking the effectiveness of their collective efforts.
 - Partners need common referral forms, tools, and definitions (such as what it means to be 'job-ready') in place before launching any significant efforts. Further, management reports, reporting schedules, data collection processes, and other logistics are critical for partners to effectively measure and manage their efforts.
 - Investments in technical assistance to support the work of the partnership as a whole is one approach to ensuring that collaborative efforts lead to intended outcomes.
- **Acknowledge past unsatisfactory experience with partnerships.** Negative impressions or bad past experiences can hinder partnership development and should be addressed early. It is important to take into consideration the real and perceived impressions of all partners. While strong inter-agency relationships and informal customer referral systems to connect people to services exist between BCSCs and CAAs, there are also power struggles between CSBG-



funded and WIA-funded services. It is also important that CAAs are acknowledged as being neighborhood-based, poverty-alleviation nonprofit organizations that offer an array of wraparound social services, and that the role of the LWC in their operations is clear. It may be helpful for the LWC to offer examples of successful partnerships that are already in place in Louisiana to alleviate concerns about negative experiences. Examples include:

TOTAL CAA in New Orleans is involved in the Southeast Regional Alliance (made up of four WIBs and eight parishes). These partners come together to engage and mobilize the resources of workforce development, economic development, education, industry, and human services to identify common goals, set regional priorities, strategically align and leverage resources to support stated objectives, and advocate for the benefit of broader talent and economic development initiatives in the region.

The Lafayette region also has promising practices for working closely with their local CAAs on the Summer Youth Employment program, as does Baton Rouge. Once positive experiences are shared by partners, they will be more comfortable expanding local efforts.

Snohomish County Workforce Development Council (WDC), Washington:

A Partnership Approach to Serving the Formerly Incarcerated

With limited resources and lacking expertise on serving this special needs population, the Snohomish County WDC researched and reached out to organizations and FBCOs currently or willing to serve formerly-incarcerated individuals. WDC learned that many FBCOs in the area did not specialize in serving this population and the few organizations with this expertise did not have the capacity to serve a large volume of One-Stop referrals. WDC established MOUs with a range of identified FBCO partners, trained One-Stop and FBCO staff on the roles and responsibilities of a client referral relationship, and developed a system for tracking this work. WDC learned how to assess the effectiveness of FBCO services over time in terms of helping One-Stop ex-offender customers address barriers to employment, secure employment and retain their jobs.

Center for Workforce Innovations (CWI), Indiana:

A universal, flexible approach for rural and urban areas

CWI had recently expanded its jurisdiction to include an urban area in addition to the rural communities that previously constituted the local WIA region. CWI looked to partner with FBCOs in order to better address the needs of all One-Stop customers and develop a uniform

client assessment and FBCO referral process to be implemented at all 12 One-Stops in the region.

Given the vast and heterogeneous region covered by the One-Stop system, CWI concluded that a bottom-up approach to developing FBCO partnerships would work best. The service offerings and capacity levels of FBCOs vary considerably across these communities, client needs and demographics differ across the region, and most importantly, Center staff had the most intimate knowledge of their local FBCO community.

The Leadership Team participated in the development of protocols for the new processes and co-facilitated training for front-line staff on the new protocols. One-Stop staff's enthusiasm for the project improved dramatically, and the new procedures were then implemented relatively quickly. CWI implemented these referral processes throughout their One-Stop system. The WIB developed a system to track the outcomes of customers referred to FBCOs for services and analyzed the impact of this work. To date hundred of customers have been served in ways they otherwise would not have, due to improvements with FBCO partnerships regionally.

Partnership-related Implementation Guidelines

Task	Responsible Office	Activity	Timeframe		
			1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Task WIBs with overseeing community-based partnership development activities in their local areas/regions.	WD Office	Strategic Planning			
Convene CAAs and BCSCs together for a statewide 'kick-off' meeting to launch a new era of collaboration between WIA and CSBG.	WD Office	Operations			
Set up regional meeting schedules between CAAs and BCSCs so that they can begin to develop common goals and objectives.	WD Office	Operations			
Identify partners that will enhance core WIA offerings. Target effective CBOs that provide services that are not adequately addressed through the BCSC and that complement current service offerings.	WD Office	Strategic Planning			

Support CAAs and BCSCs to ensure that they clarify roles and responsibilities and mobilize to develop a realistic, outcomes-driven plan of action.	WD Office	Operations	
Develop common referral forms, tools, definitions, management reports, reporting schedules, and data collection processes.	WD Office	Operations	
Identify pilot initiatives that make sense for BCSCs, CAAs, and FBCOs to test together in their region.	WD Office	Technical Assistance	

3.4. Implementation Guidelines

For ease of reference Implementation Guidelines for Local Service Delivery are presented in each subsection above.

4. COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT

4.1. Background

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), administered by the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, provides states and Community Action Agencies (CAAs) with grant funding to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities. CSBG funds may be used for a variety of poverty reduction projects including the revitalization of low-income communities and the empowerment of low-income families and individuals to become fully self-sufficient.

CSBG beneficiaries are “low-income individuals that may be unemployed or receiving public assistance, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), at-risk youth, custodial and non-custodial parents, residents of public housing, persons with disabilities, persons who are homeless, and individuals transitioning from incarceration into the community.”⁴²

Federal CSBG funds are appropriated each year for a two year period. Because of the timing of the federal budget approval process, states are usually forced to allocate funds based on estimates of federal funds until actual allocations are approved. States must submit a plan every two years.

CSBG funding allocations are determined by a formula based on each state’s poverty population. Grantees receiving funds under the CSBG program are required to provide services and activities addressing employment, education, better use of available income, housing, nutrition, emergency services and/or health.⁴³

Louisiana has received the following CSBG annual allocations in recent years:

- FY08 - \$15,265,365
- FY09 - \$16,335,580
- FY10 - \$16,335,580

In addition to the annual CSBG appropriation, states and CAAs received an additional \$1 billion in funding as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). Louisiana received \$23,473,377 as its share of ARRA CSBG funding. Consistent with the intent of the Recovery Act, states and eligible entities were directed to focus ARRA CSBG assistance on activities to preserve and create jobs to promote economic recovery and to provide assistance to those most affected by the recession.

Table 1: Louisiana and Average State CSBG Allocations shows that in each of Federal Fiscal Years 08-10, Louisiana ranked 15th in total state CSBG funding, receiving above average allocations each year.

Table 1

Louisiana and Average State CSBG Allocations		
Funding Cycle	Louisiana Allocation	Average State Allocation
FY08	\$15,265,365	\$12,219,384
FY09	\$16,335,580	\$13,080,504
FY10	\$16,335,580	\$13,079,569
ARRA	\$23,473,377	\$18,717,382

In Louisiana, CSBG funding is administered through the LWC. According to Louisiana's Workforce Investment Plan,⁴⁴ the CSBG Program enables the state to directly involve Community Action Agencies with WIA and Wagner Peyser workforce development strategies and is a vital tool for addressing the workforce needs of the state.

Once the LWC receives the state's federal CSBG funding, it then allocates the funds to CAAs in each region to provide poverty reduction programs and services.

Data shows that Louisiana's CAAs are focusing most of their grant funds on Emergency Services (over 28 percent) and Linkages (over 21.5 percent). A relatively small amount of funding is directed to Housing (2.6 percent) or Self Sufficiency (0.36 percent).

At the time of the writing of this report, the most recent Louisiana CSBG grantee data was for Federal Fiscal Year 2008. **Table 2: Louisiana CSBG Funding (statewide) - FY08** summarizes the statewide funding amount for each category of service.

Table 2

Louisiana CSBG Funding (Statewide) - FY08	
Total CSBG Funding	\$14,569,658
Percentage of State CSBG Funds:	
<i>Employment</i>	5.73
<i>Education</i>	6.43
<i>Income Management</i>	12.45
<i>Housing</i>	2.66
<i>Emergency Services</i>	28.01
<i>Nutrition</i>	17.50
<i>Linkages</i>	21.58
<i>Self Sufficiency</i>	0.36
<i>Health</i>	5.28
Total # of Community Agencies Funded	42

Details on regional allocations and spending can be found in *Attachment 1: CSBG Regional Profiles*.

4.2. Findings

There is skepticism on the part of both BCSCs and CAAs around creating formal partnerships due to a lack of common ground, incentives, and sound strategies in place to overcome differences in organizational cultures. While many CAAs have traditionally felt empowered to make their own decisions about resource allocation, there is also a sense that their work is not valued as much as other parts of the system. Additionally, the CAAs do not believe the LWC has an appreciation for the broader mission they have. This has created a lack of understanding and sometimes mistrust around motivations. Additionally, even when there are close relationships between BCSCs and CAAs such as having leadership participate on each other’s boards, this does not always result in collaboration around referrals and/or customer sharing at the service delivery level. Additional findings include:

- State and BCSC staff are sometimes perceived as interested only in workforce issues, and therefore in collaboration for their own more narrow customer target, rather than for that of the broader community. While many BCSCs have invited CAAs to have permanent locations in their centers, few CAAs are on site to

support customers on a regular basis. Further, CAA staff located at BCSCs are not always fully integrated into BCSC activities and work.

- There is concern that some BCSCs do not fully understand the range and depth of services provided by CAAs. Concurrently, some BCSCs have had poor experiences working with their local CAA for reasons such as inappropriate referrals, and a lack of understanding that the BCSCs are designed to offer a range of employment and training services, not primarily Unemployment Insurance.
- The increase in demand for services from UI claimants and others, coupled with BCSCs' funding and staffing cuts has resulted in CAA referrals sometimes getting "lost in the system," making some CAAs reluctant to closely align to the BCSC system.

4.3. Recommendations

Louisiana citizens who are most in need of employment and support services will greatly benefit from an improved coordination of resources and programs between workforce and CAAs. The LWC should develop additional and consistent opportunities to work with the CAAs while recognizing and supporting the role of the CAAs within their communities. States have been able to support the status of the CAA as a visible and crucial part of a community while at the same time, bringing them into a planning and operations structure that focuses resources on priority areas.

- **Develop a strategic planning process to inform decisions on how CSBG funds are distributed or spent.** The formula for how funds are allocated needs to be updated. This will require a public hearing process to change the State Plan as outlined in federal regulations, however this does not need to be a deterrent from reviewing these allocations. It is recommended that this be a priority for the LWC this year.
- **Increase discretionary funding to target state priorities.** Louisiana receives approximately \$16 million in CSBG funds. While states are able to allocate 5 percent for discretionary grants (in Louisiana this would be about \$800,000), Louisiana holds only \$100,000 for this purpose. Additionally, there are only very general guidelines for how this \$100,000 is spent; CAAs report that they simply apply for it if they see a need in their community. As noted below in best practice examples, states use discretionary funds to develop: special programs to support low-skill job-seekers; programs to address unmet needs; CAA training, including financial and management training; statewide initiatives, such as support for CAAs associations; fostering partnerships; incentives to collaborate; and support for cross-cutting issues such as fostering better communication among CAAs and workforce.

LWC could withhold a larger portion of new federal money until the discretionary funds held equals the five percent permitted by federal regulation. This would gradually increase discretionary funds while holding CAAs harmless – they would not see a reduction in allocations in order to build the Discretionary Fund balance. At the same time, the LWC would then have additional funds available to target state priorities. This too will require a State Plan amendment, however this should not deter the LWC from making these changes.

The National Association for State Community Services Programs conducted a review of discretionary spending with the latest data available (1999).⁴⁵ The study found that 41 states allocated \$21 million for discretionary projects.

Discretionary Program	Number of States	Percent of Discretionary Funds
Statewide Programs	16	17
Training and Technical Assistance	22	14
Demonstration Grants	10	12
Support of Sub-grantee Associations	19	9
Expansion to New Areas or Partners	10	17
Other Discretionary Uses	24	16
Migrant & Farm Worker Organizations	10	9
Tribal Organizations	7	6

Some examples of how these discretionary funds were used include:

- **Massachusetts** funded a Family Mentoring Demonstration Program that supplemented case management services to support families as they transitioned to work.
- **Arkansas** used discretionary funds to leverage other funds for projects in identified unmet needs – opening of a dental clinic, a leadership program for youth, a scholarship program for low-income, single parents, and an interpreter program to assist Spanish-speaking residents with medical and legal documents.
- **Minnesota** targeted funds for intensive financial training for CAA managers; several states used funds to develop a management information system to implement ROMA.

- **Ten states** used discretionary funds to expand services in un-served areas to fill gaps in services.
- Almost \$4.6 million was used by states to support statewide initiatives. These included such initiatives as: supporting the statewide associations to provide training and technical assistance; fostering partnerships to pool resources among neighboring CAAs; partnering with the association to conduct needs assessments and client surveys, and; providing incentives to CAAs to collaborate on a range of administrative functions.
- A significant amount of discretionary funds were used for cross-cutting initiatives such as helping the CAAs better communicate, collect data and share information.
- **Washington State** created the Community Voice Mail project to provide a voice mail messaging system for low-income and homeless individuals without telephone service as they seek employment. The project was so successful that the state eventually expanded it by leveraging other funds to coordinate with CSBG.
- **Delaware** used discretionary funds to conduct community planning meetings that brought together residents, law enforcement, CAAs, and state and local leaders to address community needs.

Missouri has recognized that a CAA cannot provide all of the support services customers may need to become self sufficient so they have taken steps to focus efforts on integrated services. They suggest:

- Supporting CAAs to think strategically, assessing the capacity of the agency and supporting the development of partnerships to develop a holistic approach to meeting an individual's needs.
 - Developing plans through use of data, not only community input such as public hearings and focus groups. Conducting data-driven needs assessments can lead CAAs to rethink their goals and more clearly decide if they are a safety net program or promoter of self-sufficiency.
 - Developing common intake and assessment processes and forms for collecting information so that these documents and processes can support consumers receiving services from multiple sites more easily.
- **Develop guidelines to better direct how CAAs conduct planning activities and operations.** Presently, CAAs are provided no guidance on how to conduct a needs assessment (required every three years). The CAAs generally use a subjective method – some report that to ascertain need and determine a

spending plan they engage in informal information gathering by talking with community residents and Head Start parents, conducting focus groups, etc. They greatly value having the authority to determine local needs and how their CSBG monies will be spent.

The LWC could improve this process in two ways. First, there is a wealth of data available through LMI and other sources that could be used to help CAAs identify community needs, trends, and local business needs. Helping CAAs make spending decisions based on data would greatly enhance their ability to focus resources on priority areas.

Secondly, the CAAs would benefit from written guidelines on how to conduct a needs assessment and data-driven decision-making. The only guidance CAAs have at this time is the federal regulations that are passed on to them. Additional guidance and instructions to establish data-driven needs assessments and decision-making would be extremely helpful.

In **Washington State**, CSBG programs are within the Department of Commerce (DOC). DOC has developed clear and concise CSBG Policies and Procedures (found in *Attachment 2: Example: Washington State CSBG Policies and Procedures*) that can be easily updated and revised as program changes dictate.⁴⁶ Besides basic information that follows federal guidelines, these policies and procedures address issues critical to the operation of a quality program such as:

- Funding allocation formula that is based on census data and local poverty levels, use of discretionary funding for emergencies, innovation and other projects, and funding to be used for training and technical assistance.
- Planning requirements that include decisions based on data.
- Contracting requirements, including requirements for CAAs contracting with local agencies.
- Fiscal policies and reporting requirements.
- Monitoring, evaluating and determinations of risk assessments.
- Training and technical assistance.

Finally, Washington CSBG Policies and Procedures detail the process when compliance-related issues are identified. CAAs are required to complete the Quality Improvement Plan form within 30 days of notice to outline how the issue will be resolved and who is the responsible party. DOC then tracks resolution to ensure the compliance issue is resolved.

- **Review the contracting process with CAAs and find ways to streamline approval without losing any integrity in the system.** Contracts with CAAs are for a two-year cycle; tentative contract amounts are provided for year two until

federal allocations are determined. At that time, contract modifications are initiated. CAAs noted that the contract process and modifications are cumbersome and take too much time before approvals are made. This sometimes requires CAAs to get bridge loans to cover payroll – an expense that should not be necessary.

The LWC should review its contracting procedures and make changes that would streamline the process without losing any integrity in processing. Further, if the LWC can better clarify turnaround times for reviewing contracts and responding to questions that arise, then CAAs will be in a position to better manage their own expectations.

- Develop a comprehensive and ongoing plan of communication with CAAs.** CAAs generally report very little collaboration between a CAA and local Business and Career Solutions Center (BCSC). There is a perception that, if there is any collaboration, it is either because the agencies are collocated or it is initiated by the CAA. There is concern in the CAA community that the BCSC will try to “take over” CAAs and direct spending, but most importantly, the CAAs will lose their identity as the community agency taking steps to reduce poverty in the community. The LWC has held several forums to bring together CAAs and workforce. These efforts, however were not mentioned by the CAAs when asked about recent collaboration opportunities, indicating that the attempts have not been successful as hoped. A plan for regular and ongoing coordination will help institutionalize a collaborative effort.

4.4. Implementation Guidelines

Task	Responsible Office	Activity	Timeframe		
			1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Develop priorities for CSBG Discretionary Funds	CSBG Office	Strategic Planning	✓		
Provide notice to CAAs of new plan for Discretionary Funds	CSBG Office	Operations	✓		
Develop guidelines for conducting Needs Assessment	CSBG Office	Technical Assistance		✓	
Provide technical assistance to CAAs to conduct Needs Assessment	CSBG Office	Technical Assistance		✓	
Develop written policies and procedures for CSBG program	CSBG Office	Technical Assistance		✓	
Design LWC monitoring and oversight plan for CAAs	CSBG Office	Monitoring		✓	

Review and streamline contracting process	CSBG Office	Operations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Revise and implement plan to communicate with CAAs	CSBG Office	Monitoring	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

5. REEMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

5.1. Background

Louisiana, like the rest of the nation, has seen a significant increase in Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims as businesses cut back in the current economy. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics,⁴⁷ Louisiana (apart from the Katrina and post-Katrina era):

- Had an unemployment rate from a low of 3.6 percent in July 2006 to 4.4 percent in July 2008 (the month Act 743 was enacted and signed by the Governor). These percentages represented 73,925 people unemployed in July 2006 to 91,433 unemployed in July 2008.
- By January 2010 the unemployment rate peaked at 7.4 percent (lower than the national rate; however still a significant increase for the state). This represented 153,912 people unemployed.
- The latest statistics available for June 2010 indicate an unemployment rate of 7 percent or 147,439 people unemployed.

Since Hurricane Karina, UI claimants in Louisiana have had a fully automated application process that is completed either through an automated phone system or online. There is no in-person application process available; a system that is typical around the country.

5.2. Findings

While the UI claims system has greatly improved the application process in some ways, it has created a new issue – increased difficulty for claimants to receive help when there is a problem with an application or to track the status of resolving issues. While the call center is operating for this purpose, it is not adequately staffed to handle the volume of calls. In addition, call center staff are sometimes reassigned to other responsibilities when backlogs begin to increase and claims processing must be expedited.

The automation of the UI application process, coupled with the sheer volume of claims, has had a dramatic impact on BCSCs. It is reported that at times fully 50 percent of those coming into a BCSC are UI claimants, and many of them with claims issues needing to be resolved. Since BCSC staff have no access to UI information, they are not able to help claimants with application problems, resulting in increasing numbers of frustrated customers at the BCSCs, creating a difficult atmosphere for staff and customers alike.

The “partial inclusion” of UI into BCSCs post-Katrina, without associated funding or systems in place to meet the needs of UI claimants, has: 1) pulled resources away from business services because there is such a high volume of UI claimants coming to centers for assistance (upwards of 50 percent of all walk-ins in most regions are UI

claimants) and; 2) sent a mixed message to the community about the purpose of BCSCs. In the original model, the UI call center system was to be employed to ensure that the BCSCs remained focused entirely on workforce development services. In practice UI claimants present at BCSCs for assistance in a way that was not intended in the original model. BCSCs report that their efforts to market themselves as workforce development, training and employment services is undermined by the current UI situation and they are automatically assumed to be the “unemployment office.”

UI claimants are frustrated by staff’s inability to resolve issues related to UI claims, which is compounded by the fact that BCSC staff are not able to view the UI system to ascertain the status of a claim. This makes it difficult to engage UI claimants in other BCSC services that may help them find work. In some Centers, tensions have run so high that directors have had to find funds to hire security. These frustrations are further exacerbated by the impression that little has been done to alleviate these issues. Even though BCSCs have spent years marketing and publicizing their name and their workforce services within their respective communities when these efforts appear to be undermined by the UI challenges – nearly all Centers stated that they feel they are automatically assumed to be the unemployment office by the community.

5.3. Recommendations

- **Develop a short-term IT fix to allow BCSC staff to have read-only capability on the UI system.** Because most Centers report that a majority of their walk-in volume consists of UI claimants in crisis, a tremendous amount of time and resources are diverted to dealing with UI claimants with questions concerning their applications. Allowing BCSCs to view UI information could help them quickly provide basic information to claimants and guide them on next steps to be taken if an application issue is identified.

NOTE: During the course of the writing of this report the LWC changed the system to allow BCSCs to view UI claims information to help claimants presenting at the BCSC with UI claims issues. They have also targeted staff in the BCSCs who have UI background to help with resolving claims issues. These actions will have an immediate and significant affect on improving services.

- **Redefine process for serving UI applicants based on models from best practices states.** One model may not work for everyone. It is clear that urban BCSCs have very different challenges than rural BCSCs. This difference should be recognized and models developed to help each BCSC meet the needs of job-seekers.
- **Reinstate the process that required UI applicants to register at the BCSC as a condition for receiving benefits.** Legislation was enacted in Louisiana many years ago that required UI applicants to register at the BCSC as a condition for receiving unemployment benefits. This requirement was suspended in the aftermath of Katrina and has not been reinstated. The LWC should consider

reinstating this requirement, however, it should be done in conjunction with a planning process with the BCSCs in order to ensure the process is implemented effectively.

- **Provide technical assistance to BCSCs to help them develop the model that works best for each particular area.** Overall, BCSCs would benefit from the LWC providing technical assistance to help them identify strengths, assess demands for services and develop a unique approach that considers the realities faced by each BCSC. This is especially the case in helping BCSCs plan for how to deal with the large number of UI claimants coming to the centers. For example, BCSCs should have systems in place that ensure UI claimants are provided with information about the range of reemployment services available to them. The LWC may also want to explore shared case management approaches between BCSCs and UI staff. Currently, BCSCs need strategies for how to work with UI customers who are hostile or express disinterest in taking up reemployment services; BCSC staff report that once claimants actually access services, they tend to be happy with BCSC offerings, but that it is very difficult to engage them initially when they are in crisis.
- **Make better use of LMI information to help job-seekers.** There is a wealth of information available through LMI data; so much so that staff may be on “information overload.” Staff would benefit from help on understanding LMI data and how to interpret data for job-seekers.
- **Review call center operations and develop a plan for improvement in both staff response and technology.** A more in-depth review of call center operations, including possible small investments in technology, would help identify a plan for improvement. The shortage of staff to handle the increased volume of UI applicants has required management to move staff around to handle priority areas, thus causing even more frustration in the call center operations. Finally, the call center should also be equipped with a resource guide that details/promotes BCSC services and staff should be able to speak to these services when working with UI claimants.

The call center should consider establishing specific telephone or e-mail mechanisms to permit BCSC staff to directly reach appropriate UI staff for answers to more complex claims inquiries.

NOTE: During the course of writing this report, the LWC has taken action to review call center operations and are making changes to improve response time.

States are experimenting with a variety of innovative approaches to handling the challenge of increased UI claimants seeking assistance at One Stop Centers. This includes using mobile units on site at companies closing or in the process of laying off a large number of workers, developing new online skills assessment tools, integrating UI data

systems with workforce, using group meetings and/or targeted classes to support job-seekers and using every tool available to understand how to prioritize needs and services.

Some examples of innovative approaches are described below.

Wisconsin⁴⁸ used their ARRA funds to revamp the connection between unemployment claims and workforce services. First, they prioritized hiring Master-level Career Counselors so that there is at least one counselor in each of the 11 districts around the state. Officials believe this proved to be an important ingredient in their reform efforts because these professionals were able to engage UI claimants more effectively. These hires, along with establishing a statewide call center fundamentally changed how they do business in Wisconsin.

When individuals file UI claims (on-line or over the phone) the system automatically generates a letter advising the claimant that they must log onto the system and: 1) develop a resume; 2) complete a survey questionnaire; and 3) print these documents and bring them to the session scheduled for them. The first appointment is a group session followed by a short one-on-one interview. Counselors review the resume and survey information and identify next steps the claimant should take. This type of triage session places claimants into three categories: 1) work-ready (needing little follow-up, generally expected to be able to find employment with little intervention); 2) counseling needed (claimant needs some additional help on next steps because previous employer is out of business, needs to consider new occupation, etc.) and; 3) referral needed (claimant needs training, referral to special services such as vocational rehabilitation, etc.).

UI claimants are given a user identification and password to log onto the system to practice on KeyTrain® (a computer-based, self-directed skills assessment and training program) to prepare for taking the WorkKeys® test (also a computer-based program helping individuals improve skills and test for career readiness). They are advised that they must score at least a Level 3. Once claimants reach Level 3, they are advised to call the statewide call center who verifies eligibility for WorkKeys® testing and they are then given information on taking the WorkKeys® test. Depending on the group in which the claimant is placed, services are identified for next steps, training or referral. In addition, automated email follow-ups are made to claimants to determine: 1) if the claimant took recommended steps; 2) if the claimant obtained a job, and 3) collect general customer service feedback.

Claimants who are part of the Re-employment Assessment (REA) and are in danger of having unemployment claims expire, are provided the same opportunities for KeyTrain® practice and WorkKeys® testing. This group is also triaged into the same groupings as other claimants – work-

ready, counseling, or referral. Those in the REA group have a more intensive follow-up, however, and must attend a case management session (which includes the Career Counselor and UI Adjudicator) after approximately two to three weeks. If barriers to employment are identified, services are provided; if no barriers, and the claimant is in agreement with the plan, the claimant is provided with another opportunity to take the required steps.

If a claimant does not appear for an appointment, the system is coded to refer the claimant to the call center where a call is made to the claimant and the system is re-coded to trigger a second appointment letter. If still no attendance, disqualification from UI is possible.

Wisconsin is considering using this system as a model for bringing TANF recipients into the workforce system.

Like Wisconsin, **Minnesota**⁴⁹ used ARRA funds to hire experienced counselors because of the higher level of engagement that experienced counselors were able to achieve. UI claimants are sent a letter advising them of the requirement to attend an orientation session. At this session, 20 to 25 participants are given a “sales pitch” to interest them in attending a two-day, 14-hour course covering such topics as LMI data to identify emerging sectors, resume writing, accessing Labor Exchange information, and interviewing skills.

The two-day session includes one-on-one time when claimants require help with using a computer, additional resume writing assistance, or other individual needs. Once claimants complete the two-day course, they are offered additional classes such as: Introduction to Health Care Careers, What to Consider When Identifying New Occupations, How to Use Social Networks, How to Tap into Hidden Markets, Interviewing Skills for Introverts.

During a dramatic increases in the number of UI claims, **Oregon** has undergone several modifications to the way in which UI claimants are connected to workforce. Initially, UI generates a letter advising applicants that they must register at a One Stop within 14 days or they will not receive a check. A list is of all applicants receiving such letters is sent to the appropriate center to indicate the number of people expected to register with them. As in some other states, new claimants were required to attend a group meeting. After the completion of the group meeting, claimants initially were required to remain at the One Stop for a one-on-one meeting. These meetings were eventually eliminated because claimants had to wait hours to see a workforce specialist.

After the group meetings were eliminated, new UI claimants were directed to work on an online skills assessment program. The initial assessment

determines which job-seekers are ready for Career Readiness Certificate testing and those that will need additional help.

Similar to Louisiana, Oregon was faced with large numbers of UI claimants at One Stops who needed information on their UI claims. To address this, Oregon set up a three-tier system in which: 1) workforce staff have access to the UI database to look up claims and advise applicants on the issues identified; 2) specially trained staff has more access to information on the UI system if the problem cannot be resolved initially, and; 3) Employment Supervisors can contact a UI Supervisor by phone to resolve more complicated issues. Overall, the message to One Stops is “get the problem resolved” so that claimants can concentrate on reemployment activities.

Utah invested resources, time and effort into designing and implementing an information system that supports the connection between UI application and workforce services. Information obtained during the UI claims process automatically populates the workforce system database. Utah uses software called AutoCoder to identify ONET code information that is supplied to LMI. LMI then uses the code information to provide job opportunities to UI claimants through a “My Account” page on the web.

Based on models in Minnesota and the private sector, **New York**⁵⁰ implemented the SMART 2010 job lead service. One Stop staff enter a customer’s resume into SMART 2010 and the system “matches” knowledge, skills and abilities with job openings in the New York Job Bank. Jobs are rated on a five-star system and results are emailed to the customer who can follow up to link to more detailed information on any job of interest. New York believes this system has opened up a considerable amount of time of One Stop staff who no longer must spend time “job matching.”

Other promising practices include⁵¹:

- **Sever** states set up a mechanism for individuals to sign up for Unemployment Insurance and workforce services at Rapid Response sites when companies notify the state that they are closing down.
- **Texas** set up a 10-week reemployment measure – targeting reducing the number of weeks an individual is collecting benefits from the average of 16 weeks. This measure was widely publicized throughout the system. In three years Texas was able to increase the number of claimants employed within 10 weeks from 25 percent to 58 percent.
- **Texas** provides local One Stops with a list of new claimants and contact information the following day after sign up. The One Stops then reach out to claimants to engage them in workforce services immediately.

- **Washington** holds Skills Panels around the state related to industry clusters – bringing together businesses, economic development partners, community providers – to identify current and emerging job market.
- **Several states** have established common application forms/information collection so that claimants do not have to provide basic information multiple times.
- **Florida** has found that reminder calls to participants a few days prior to scheduled appointments has increased their “show rate.” TANF participants with a work requirement are making calls from One Stop centers – thus meeting required work activities while improving services for other unemployed individuals.

5.4. Implementation Guidelines

Task	Responsible Office	Activity	Timeframe		
			1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Modify UI information system to allow BCSCs Read-Only access	UI Office	IT	☑		
Conduct a targeted, fast-track strategic planning initiative to work with BCSCs on model for handling UI claimants	WD Office	Strategic Planning	☑		
Provide technical assistance to BCSCs to implement model best suited for the area	WD Office	Technical Assistance	☑		
Launch training sessions to assist BCSCs with interpretation and use of LMI data	WD Office	Training		☑	
Plan and conduct targeted staff training	WD Office	Training		☑	
Review and improve call center operations	UI Office	Operations		☑	

6. LOUISIANA REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

6.1. Background

Integration of Workforce and Vocational Rehabilitation

In fall 2009, the legislative Streamlining Commission released a series of recommendations designed to align state government agency missions and operations and generate budget savings. The Commission made several recommendations to reorganize and modernize the Department of Social Services, now the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Recommendation #77 called for certain rehabilitation functions of the DCFS to be transferred to the Louisiana Workforce Commission and the Department of Health and Hospitals.⁵² Subsequently, the Governor's Executive budget and legislative agenda called for a reorganized DCFS framework that would transfer programs not associated with children and families to other agencies better aligned with their "core competencies."⁵³ In spring 2010, the legislature transferred regulatory authority for Louisiana Rehabilitation Services' (LRS') employment-related programs from the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC). These programs included the:

- Vocational Rehabilitation Program
- Randolph-Sheppard Program
- Independent Living Part B Program
- Independent Living for Older Blind Program.⁵⁴

In anticipation of this transition, the LWC leadership asked **Public Works** to prepare an expedited memorandum outlining priority issues for consideration in the LRS transition. The report identified several areas that the LWC and DCFS needed to coordinate and plan during the 2010 legislative session and subsequent transition period. Priority planning areas outlined in the **Public Works** memorandum included:

Fiscal/Budget

- Transition Costs – development of fiscal notes and possible appropriations to cover the full costs of LRS transition to the LWC (including costs to undertake all budget and legal reviews needed for the transition).
- Ongoing Costs – development of fiscal notes and possible appropriations to cover all ongoing overhead costs for the LWC administration of LRS.
- Eliminating Redundancies – review of staffing and other resources to determine areas where transition could produce redundancies.
- Facility Costs – evaluation of current LRS facility and other lease costs and ability to save funds by consolidating with other LWC sites.
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) federal funding match requirements – review of all Louisiana funds currently used in federal match related to VR:
 - Review of all current DCFS State General Fund match sources to determine transferability to the LWC. [If any DCFS match funds (e.g. any administrative cost-sharing) are not transferable, then development of

fiscal projections for equivalent amount of state funds for LWC's use in matching.]

- Review of eligible LWC funds for federal fund matching from non-profit and/or grant sources.
- Determination of whether State General Fund appropriations transitioned from DCFS to LWC could be used for other federal fund match requirements (e.g., from DOL & US Dept of Education).

Legal

- Litigation Review – full review of pending litigation with LRS as a named party and determination of responsible party for any costs related to legal representation or ultimate damages.
- Contractual Review – full review of all current and pending contracts in which LRS and/or DCFS are named parties (to determine whether transition affects contract status).
- Agreements with Federal Agencies – review of all legal (including funding) agreements in which DCFS is the named agency to administer federal programs and funds and update to LWC.
- Regulatory Authority – review of all state and federal regulatory policies related to vocational rehabilitation for implication in LRS transition to LWC.
- Confidentiality Considerations – review of all state and federal confidentiality requirements related to Vocational Rehabilitation clients to ensure compliance by LWC employees and adherence in LWC systems; evaluation of any barriers to sharing of appropriate information between LRS and LWC in serving clients.

Policy/Legislative

- Legislative Committees – review of all LRS legislative committee and sub-committees of jurisdiction to determine effects of transition to the LWC.
- Review of LWC & DCFS Statutes -- review of current Louisiana statutes related to LWC and DCFS for impacts/needed changes post-LRS transition, including, but not limited to:
 - RS 36:301-310, RS 36:313. Current statutory provisions re: LWC.
 - RS 36:473-478. Current statutory provisions of DCFS.
- Statutory Review of Vocational Rehabilitation Issues – review of current Louisiana statutes (including sections listed above) and all other Louisiana statutory references to “vocational rehabilitation” including:

Louisiana Statute	Title/Description
RS 23:1127	Release of medical records and information
RS 37:3443	Definitions
RS 37:3448	License without examination
RS 37:3450	Violations; penalties
RS 23:1226	Rehabilitation of injured employees
RS 37:3444	Louisiana Licensed Professional Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors Board of Examiners
RS 37:3447	Requirements for licensed professional counselor; renewal of license
RS 37:3449	Denial, revocation, or suspension of license
RS 46:2101	VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION
HRULE 6.6	HRULE 6.6
RS 11:780	Reexamination of beneficiaries retired for disability; modification of benefits; restoration to active service
RS 36:474	Powers and duties of the secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services
RS 46:2105	Donations; department's authority to receive
CCP 1464	Order for physical or mental examination of persons
RS 17:2048.51	Louisiana Health Works Commission; creation; membership; compensation; staff and facilities; powers and duties; data collection and reporting
RS 46:331, part B.	Prevention of blindness & vocational training.

6.2. Findings

Subsequent to **Public Works'** transition planning memorandum, the LWC and LRS established seven Transition Planning Teams to focus on each component of the transfer. These teams included:

- Fiscal/Financial
- Human Resources
- Support Services
- Legal
- Communications
- Information Technology
- Program

The Transition Planning Teams held regularly-scheduled meetings beginning in early 2010 and developed Transition Work Plans for each team. Implementation of these work plans is ongoing.

To further assist LWC and LRS officials in their transition planning, **Public Works** – in conjunction with the Center for State Innovation (CSI) -- hosted a Strategy Academy in March 2010. The Academy brought national experts, practitioners and thought-leaders to Baton Rouge to discuss topics of vocational rehabilitation service integration and other workforce topics. As noted earlier in this report, the Academy discussions centered on innovative approaches and experiences (both successes and challenges) from other states when integrating services.

Academy subject-matter experts pointed out that vocational rehabilitation transitions have to deal with more than just the traditional challenges of integration such as operational shifts, logistics, and changes in agency culture. The experts noted that a transfer of vocational rehabilitation agencies can be even trickier because of the states' heavy reliance on Federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) funding for vocational rehabilitation programs and all of the regulations tied to these funds. (Federal RSA funds make up 78.7 percent of Louisiana's total vocational rehabilitation funds.)

Vocational Rehabilitation Funding

To qualify for federal RSA funding, states are required to provide matching funds equivalent to 21.3 percent of their federal award. Due to budget restrictions in recent years, Louisiana has been unable to meet its full funding match, leaving over \$14 million in federal funds on the table annually. Under federal law, if vocational rehabilitation agencies are unable to serve all eligible clients due to lack of funds, the agency is required to provide services under an "Order of Selection" to ensure that the first priority for vocational rehabilitation services is given to the most significantly disabled. To determine service priorities, states classify clients into five categories, Groups I through V, with Group I being the most significantly disabled.

From January 10, 2006 through April 13, 2009, LRS was able to serve all five Order of Selection Groups. However, due to budget reductions, beginning April 14, 2009, LRS began serving Order of Selection Groups I and II only. (Consumers in Groups III through V who were already receiving services were allowed to continue, however no new services were provided to Groups III through V.)⁵⁵

LRS estimates that it will serve 23,013 individuals during fiscal year 2010-11. Of this number, approximately 2,811 will receive supported employment services. Currently, 94 percent of the individuals being served are classified as “most significantly disabled.” At its briefing to the Workforce Investment Council (WIC) on June 29, 2010, LRS projected revenue from the State General Funds of \$8,503,388 and Federal Section 110 Funds of \$47,033,665 for the upcoming year. LRS projected that \$4,690,780 will be needed for administration cost and \$50,846,273 will be needed to provide services to eligible consumers in Groups I and II.⁵⁶

LRS reports that they now serve about 28,000 consumers (Groups I and II) with about 4,000 in application status. They have approximately 800 in deferred waiting list status (in Categories III through V).⁵⁷

6.3. Recommendations

Integration of Workforce and Vocational Rehabilitation

- **Use LRS transition as an opportunity to enhance collaboration between workforce and vocational rehabilitation staff at every level.** The Streamlining Commission, the Governor, and the legislature all expect to see much more than operational efficiencies after the transition of LRS to the LWC. They have all indicated that the two agencies share “core competencies” and a common mission to help Louisianans to enter the workforce and become productive there. While LRS reports that it has established working relationships with 67 Business and Career Solution Centers (BCSCs) within the 18 Workforce Investment Areas, there is still opportunity to enhance relationships and collaboration.

Budget cuts in recent year have forced LRS to establish an “Order of Service” to ensure that the first priority for vocational rehabilitation services is given to the most significantly disabled. Understandably, these individuals will require the most support among LRS consumers before they are ready to enter the workforce. The LWC, on the other hand, prioritizes individuals who are “ready to work” when it must determine where the agency should focus its efforts. This natural tension among priority populations will make it more important than ever that the LWC and LRS work together to maximize their resources, determine clear planning and communications channels, and develop collaboration opportunities.

- **Prioritize elements of LRS transition that will ensure compliance, minimize disruption to consumers, and ultimately improve services.** As noted earlier, the leadership of the LWC, DCFS and LRS created seven Transition Work Groups to plan and implement the necessary steps for a smooth LRS transition. Early in this process, the groups met regularly and developed fairly elaborate Work Plans to guide the transition. However, in recent months, the Work Groups have not updated the status of their Work Plans and several implementation deadlines have been missed. On July 1st, LRS officially became a component

part of LWC but many steps in the transition Work Plan remain incomplete. The LWC and LRS leadership should immediately review the status of the transition Work Plans to ensure full and ongoing compliance with all state and federal laws and regulations (including all fiscal issues) related to vocational rehabilitation. Beyond the immediate legal and compliance review and triage, agency leaders should assess next steps in each plan and prioritize those that will minimize disruptions in services to consumers. After immediate priorities are determined, the LWC and LRS should reconvene the formal Work Groups to update the Work Plans and establish a new timeline that must be met with full and timely follow-through.

- **Develop an internal referral process for LRS clients in Groups III - V who are not currently being served by LRS, but who could be supported by the LWC.** Until LRS is again able to serve all eligible vocational rehabilitation consumers, counselors should be vigilant about making referrals for consumers in Groups III – V to the services available through the BCSCs. The fact that LWC and LRS field staff are not co-located around the state is no reason for there to be a disconnect in services and referrals between the agencies. Leadership in both the LWC and LRS can require that the regional staffs of both agencies work in tandem to deliver seamless services to “shared” clients.
- **Build upon current successes and align business outreach and engagement efforts of the LWC Business Service Representatives (BSRs) and LRS Rehabilitation Development Specialists (REDS).** The success of any workforce investment initiative is contingent on the active participation of employers. This is true both for mainstream systems, such as the BCSCs as well as programs that target specific populations, such as LRS. There are already several good examples of LRS working with the LWC on business outreach and engagement efforts. For example, LRS is working with the LWC/Disability Program Navigators on the 2010 Job Fair. LRS has met with the Commission regarding event documentation and planning, as well as being a consultant to the Disability Program Navigators who have the Job Fair Lead for 2010. LRS Rehabilitation Development Specialist (REDS) have also been active in meeting with various Disability Program Navigators throughout the state.⁵⁸ Also, LRS has been working closely with the VR Business Network to disseminate information to the REDS concerning positions being offered by such companies as Walgreen’s, J. Lodge, Convergys, Harrah’s, and the U.S. Federal Government.⁵⁹ LRS staff has worked hard to develop relationships with businesses and employers around the state and have a lot of good practices to share with the workforce experts at LWC. Agency leadership should arrange opportunities for LRS REDS and the LWC BSRs to work together closely and share strategies for business outreach and engagement.

Maryland: At MontgomeryWorks, the One-Stop Career Center in Montgomery County, Maryland, over 30 partnering agencies work together in some way in the coordination of services and employer recruitment for job-seekers with disabilities. The partnering agencies, led by the local workforce and vocational rehabilitation staffs, worked together to:

- Share job leads through a job posting listserve;
- Access the contacts of the business services unit of MontgomeryWorks, which regularly canvases the business community for job openings;
- Participate in regular employer recruitment events;
- Team with the Disability Program Navigator to facilitate job-seeker access to One-Stop services and other resources; and
- Collaborate with career specialists who are experienced in helping job-seekers with significant disabilities obtain customized employment opportunities with local businesses.⁶⁰

Delaware: In Wilmington, vocational rehabilitation came under the administrative umbrella of the Delaware Department of Labor in 1995. After the transition, staff members from all divisions were located in the same building. The co-location allowed the vocational rehabilitation staff to provide a broad range of services. Staff found that the vocational rehabilitation services offered a "separate protocol" and could provide more intensive planning and resources than those typically available for training through the Department of Labor. Because Delaware's vocational rehabilitation services were not in an Order of Selection, referrals were handled promptly. This was very important to the voc rehab staff members who took the position that they should be responsible for all eligible job-seekers with disabilities because their agency was the most knowledgeable about making disability determinations. The Department of Labor and vocational rehabilitation services staff all found that their close physical proximity increased the voc rehab team's access to information resources and opened up lines of communication. They also found that the workforce agency staff more readily called upon their expertise in serving customers with disabilities and improved service all around.⁶¹

Washington: In the Vancouver Town Plaza Center in Clark County, vocational rehabilitation (VR) staff works closely with their local workforce colleagues. The VR staff not only provides specialized services at the One-Stops, but also functions in a consultation role, offering guidance and advice to local workforce staff on how to identify needs, what to ask, and whether to consider vocational rehabilitation services. Evaluations of this One-Stop showed that staff were receptive to this type of support and later started to involve VR staff more frequently when assessing clients' skills and selecting the most appropriate services for them. In this case,

full physical co-location also encouraged staff from the different agencies to collaborate more, coordinate cases jointly, and share more resources for the benefit of their clients, including equipment, information, and knowledge.⁶²

Vocational Rehabilitation Funding

- **Better leverage federal Vocational Rehabilitation funding opportunities by developing more third-party agreements with other state agencies.** Funds supplied by third-parties pursuant to these agreements can be applied toward a state's required funding match to draw down federal funds. Currently, LRS has only two third-party agreements that use in-kind match to draw federal funds. These include:
 - **University of New Orleans: TRAC ExCEL Program** which provides training for consumers to become entrepreneurs and develop small businesses.⁶³
 - **Louisiana Tech Center for Rehabilitation Engineering, Science and Technology (CREST)** which provides assistive technologies and assessments such as home and job-modification evaluations, computer assessments, and positioning assessments for wheelchairs and wheeled mobility systems.⁶⁴

Beyond these two current arrangements, LRS leadership could not recall using other third-party agreements.⁶⁵

The LWC should work closely with LRS leadership to explore options for intergovernmental agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) to establish third-party agreements and expand match funds that can then be approved by the federal RSA. Researching and establishing such agreements will require a significant amount of work and detail at the program level which must be supported by agency leadership.

It should be noted that the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has approved many examples of third-party agreements, but it does caution states that these should not be the primary mechanism for matching federal funds. RSA has established some restrictions for the use of third-party funds and the services they support. Specifically:

- Funded services cannot replace existing vocational rehabilitation services.
- Third-party funds can only be used for eligible rehabilitation services (RS) consumers.
- Third-party agreements can only be made with public agencies.
- The state rehabilitation services agency must have:
 - Control over the spending through contracts and/or Memoranda of Understanding
 - Administrative supervision over program and funding.

Again, even with these restrictions, other states have been able to get federal approval of third-party agreements as a mechanism to draw down federal funds. There is no reason that Louisiana cannot do the same.

Following the March 2010 Strategy Academy, LWC and **Public Works** staff convened meetings with two agencies (the Department of Corrections and the Department of Education) to discuss possible opportunities for third-party vocational rehabilitation agreements. Both agencies were very responsive to the possibility of such agreements and have committed to work with the LWC and LRS to determine next steps. LWC has appointed two Work Group to continue these conversations. The LWC and LRS leadership should require regular updates on the progress of these Work Groups and should put additional groups in place with other agencies to explore all available opportunities to maximize the state's match for available federal funds.

If Louisiana can identify additional state match dollars, it could draw down the \$14+million that has been left on the table annually in recent years. With additional drawdown funds, Louisiana could again have sufficient funds to serve consumers in all five "Order of Selection" groups.

Wisconsin: The State of Wisconsin has developed several third-party agreements with other state agencies that allow them to partner on projects and utilize non-VR dollars to meet their federal RSA funding match. In compliance with federal VR regulations, Wisconsin established these collaborative projects by executing Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with other state agencies to clearly delineate roles and responsibilities as well as project and funding oversight. A sample of Wisconsin's MOU is attached to this report in *Attachment 3: Wisconsin RS Third-Party Agreement*.

- **Conduct a state funding match survey of all potentially-eligible LWC, LRS, and partner agency funds.** Beyond the most immediate opportunities for leveraging federal RSA funds with the Departments of Corrections and Education, the LWC and LRS should be focused longer-term on conducting a statewide assessment of other opportunities for intergovernmental agreements and third-party collaborations. Specifically, LRS should explore possibilities with mental health or other health and human service programs. Formal survey tools are not needed to conduct such an inquiry. To start, the LWC and LRS could put together a simple questionnaire for state agency partners to query about the services they perform, customers they serve, and the funding currently utilized for such projects. Agencies should be encouraged to think not only about the funding streams which are *currently* used for projects, but also about their match history, availability of all interagency transfers and other funds that might be eligible to support the current projects in the future. (Could a program currently being financed with State General Fund dollars be supported instead by an alternative federal, private, or non-profit source thus freeing up the state dollar to

be used as match for a new-vocational rehabilitation initiative?) Such a survey should also assess opportunities to increase funding match ratios. (Could a State General Fund dollar that is currently being used in a 50:50 federal match instead be better leveraged by LRS in a close to 80:20 federal-state match?)

6.4. Implementation Guidelines

Task	Responsible Office	Activity	Timeframe		
			1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Review LRS Transition Work Plan and prioritize legal, finance compliance issues	LRS	Operations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Establish new timeline for remaining Transition action items	LRS	Operations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Develop internal referral processes for regional BCSC and LRS staff	LRS	Strategic Planning			
Organize opportunities for LWC BSRs and LRS REDS to share business outreach and engagement strategies	LRS	Technical Assistance			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Continue work of Dept of Education and Dept of Corrections Work Groups re: possible voc rehab third-party agreements	LRS	Strategic Planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Conduct brainstorming meetings with other state agencies about partnership opportunities with LRS	LRS	Strategic Planning		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Conduct a funding match survey to identify possibilities to enhance state matching funds	LRS	Strategic Planning			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

7. DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

7.1. Background

Perhaps one of the most challenging integration/coordination areas is that of workforce services for the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) work programs. While seemingly a “natural fit,” there are in fact, several challenges to integration that must be considered. States run the gamut on integration -- two states, Texas and Florida, have fully integrated TANF into their One Stop system – while others are on a continuum of little interaction of the programs to significant coordination short of total integration.

The most significant challenge to integration of WIA and TANF is agreement on system goals. WIA, with an emphasis on employment and training, has a strong focus on the needs of the business community. TANF goals for families, who are primarily low-skilled workers, is to become self-sufficient – helping families to not only find a job, but also to retain employment and continually strive to increase wages to a living wage.

The Center for Law and Social Policy⁶⁶ published an analysis of the two programs and found barriers to be:

- **Different program goals:** Workforce has historically invested in the development of human capital; TANF has traditionally adopted a “work first” model.
- **Different approaches to coordination:** Agencies do not always agree on who should do assessments, how long participants are engaged in activities, what constitutes work-ready, etc.
- **Different performance standards:** Perhaps the most difficult barrier when considering coordination and/or integration of programs is that TANF must track participation rates and has very specific definitions of “allowable activities” and the length of time a consumer can participate. WIA has no such constraints.
- **Incompatible forms and information systems:** IT systems that support program management and reporting requirements are essential to both systems. These, however, are not always compatible since each system has federal reporting requirements that are different.
- **Complexity:** Both WIA and TANF-related work programs have grown into a complex system of agencies and providers that offer the range of work programs from job search to training. Organizing these many services into one, coherent system takes considerable planning and time.
- **Time commitments:** Coordination of programs such as WIA and TANF is not a one-time activity; it takes a commitment of time and resources on a continual

basis. Planning and maintaining coordination requires ongoing involvement at all levels of the organization.

7.2. Findings

The application and provision of employment and training services for STEP and LaJET consumers is one of the most active areas in Louisiana. While this review was taking place, DCFS was planning new ways to better serve their consumers. As these changes are made, it will take ongoing communication and a collaborative effort between DCFS and the LWC to ensure the impact on workforce services is clearly understood and planned.

DCFS currently operates two employment programs that could potentially be integrated into the LWC – STEP and LaJET. There are many aspects of the STEP/LaJET integration work that need to be reviewed by the LWC leadership (and ultimately between the LWC and DCFS) to fully understand if and how these programs should be integrated. **Public Works** and **Seedco** participated in several meetings and conference calls with the LWC/DCFS workgroup to review these programs and to review the plan for integration. In addition, we requested separate meetings with DCFS program managers to review what processes are currently in place. These meetings were very informative and helped to better define the challenges that still need to be addressed before an integration of these programs can take place. They also highlighted, however, that there are significant issues that must be researched before work on developing an integration plan can move forward.

At the time of these meetings, there seemed to be no clear goal and plan for integration, nor could anyone really articulate how integrating these programs would improve services. At times the LWC leadership involved in this effort envisioned a total integration of programs; at other times simply consolidating contract services for training and education were discussed.

NOTE: During the course of writing this report, the decision was made to have the LWC assume responsibility for employment and training contracts for STEP and LaJET only. DCFS will maintain all other responsibilities for the programs.

Public Works produced the following flow charts for the STEP and LaJET programs to illustrate the complexity of the programs and the many decision points that must be identified and resolved before the programs can be integrated. In addition, *Attachment 4: STEP Definitions and Reporting Requirements* outlines the STEP definitions and reporting requirements; again, an illustration of the details that must be considered in planning for integration of the programs.





7.3. Recommendations

First and foremost, a long-term assessment of the goals for these programs needs to be determined. If it is determined there are benefits to improve services and operate more efficiently by integrating STEP and LaJET, than there is a need to implement a strategic planning process – much like the one currently underway for the LRS integration in order to fully integrate the DCFS programs into LWC. While the STEP and LaJET programs are not of the same size and scale as LRS, they are considerably more complicated, with millions of dollars of federal funds in question if participation rates are not achieved. In order to fully integrate STEP and LaJET into LWC, detailed planning must be completed on finance, technology, legal, human resources and program components – again similar to how these issues are being addressed in the LRS integration. Other recommendations include:

- **Establish a multi-year plan for integration if the ultimate goal is to fully consolidate programs.** The complexity of these programs, the extensive federal reporting, and intricate participation rate requirements necessitates an infrastructure be in place that will allow for the smooth transition without risk of federal sanctions.

It may seem obvious that the goal is to improve the programs in order to achieve better employment outcomes for participants. Yet, because of the complexity of these programs, especially involving all the services required to support families, the LWC and DCFS should clearly identify what parts of the program are best moved to the LWC and what should stay with DCFS. It is strongly suggested that LWC maintain focus on all employment related activities while leaving support services with DCFS (child care, transportation, etc.). Maintaining eligibility and providing the allowable support services is complex and beyond the scope of LWC's focus on employment at this time.

NOTE: During the course of writing this report, the decision was made, not to consolidate the programs, but to focus efforts first on integrating employment and training contracts into the LWC system.

Florida⁶⁷ substantially reorganized its welfare system in 2000 with the consolidation of TANF and workforce under one board – Workforce Florida, Inc. – and the creation of the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI). Workforce, TANF and employment services are now delivered by 24 Regional Workforce Boards through Local One-Stop Centers. Florida policymakers made a decision to create a system that has a strong support structure to provide services for the long term – not only getting people off public assistance, but also investing in training and education to support families and workers to make a living wage.

Each One-Stop includes: job training, employment programs, child care assistance, transportation assistance, substance and mental health treatment, child support enforcement, domestic violence and child abuse programs, relocation assistance, and programs to prevent families from going onto welfare. Local boards have considerable authority and responsibility for WIA, Wagner-Peyser, TANF, Veterans' Employment and Training, Food Stamp Employment and Training, and Job Corps. The legislature was convinced to establish this system because of strong employer support. The integrated system has clear performance measures to hold local offices accountable for outcomes.

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)⁶⁸ was established in 1995 to bring together 28 workforce development programs and TANF. The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) remains responsible for TANF eligibility determination, federal reporting and participant sanctioning when needed. The TWC administers the Choices program through contracts with providers who are required to monitor and verify participation and to notify HHSC when a participant is not complying.

Texas is able to maintain this type of system because they have a Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) to track referrals and manage participation that interfaces with the HHSC automated system. The Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System (TIERS) links HHSC eligibility information with the TWIST work-related information for participants. Staff, therefore, has information on participants and can easily enter information on participation, request sanctions and produce performance reports.

- **Develop a thorough analysis of program participants and available resources.** There are many unanswered questions about the current resources (money and staff) that are being used to operate the STEP and LaJET programs. A thorough analysis of these factors is a first step in planning for the future.

In addition, more detailed program participation data is needed in order to assess the impact on the BCSCs. Program sites need to be assessed (what parishes have what programs) in order to understand resource levels at the local level.

DCFS provided information on four STEP contracts. **Public Works** completed an outline of these contracts though some data was missing and a request was made for DCFS to provide the missing data. With the decision to consolidate contracts, the review of the details is now taking place.

- **Develop a Memorandum of Understanding to identify roles and responsibilities of the LWC and DCFS.** An MOU is necessary, not only to clearly outline how assessments will be conducted, how support services will be provided, and how non-compliance is processed, etc., but also to ensure roles and responsibilities are clear for federal drawdown of funds.

- **Review findings and lessons learned from LaJET Pilot.** Currently, the LaJET pilot is an extremely paper-intensive operation that cannot be sustained if the program is completely integrated into LWC. In addition, there are many open questions about rules and regulations, responsibilities, and operational details that need to be addressed. Conversations with the BCSCs' staff involved in the current pilot suggest that they are successes and lessons learned about how to best serve LaJET customers. This experience needs to be fully assessed to determine the next steps in integration.
- **Develop short- and long-term IT system improvements.** As noted earlier, the current LaJET Pilot is extremely paper-intensive and there is no indication that there will be additional IT support to fix this or to support integration of the STEP program as well. An IT system that can support referrals, tracking participation and reporting requirements is essential. Paper- and staff-intensive operations cannot be maintained. Nor does it improve program operations for participants when it takes weeks before appointments are sent to SNAP applicants advising them to come to the Business and Career Solutions Center.
- **Establish a planning process to engage local WIBs in planning for coordination and/or eventual consolidation.** The policy and strategic decisions that will be made in relation to the degree of integration of DCFS programs into workforce will have a dramatic impact on local operations. As the LWC and DCFS clarify expectations, a planning process must be in place to involve local service delivery staff who can contribute to the discussion on how state decisions will impact local operations.
- **Develop a detailed implementation plan to customize services for STEP/LaJET customers in the BCSC system.** STEP/LaJET customers tend to be harder to serve in terms of their needs and challenges compared to the typical BCSC customer. BCSCs need training such as: 1) how front-line staff can meet the needs of hard-to-serve customers with multiple barriers to employment, and: 2) how best to use local resources to tap into expertise of local community-based organizations that offer supportive services to families in need.

Both STEP and LaJET have very specific definitions of eligibility, work-eligible, allowable activities, duration of activities, support services participants are entitled to, and considerable federal reporting requirements on all of these program components. The process flow, definition of work-eligible, allowable activities and reporting requirements developed by **Public Works** seems to be the first attempt at outlining these items in sufficient detail to make informed decisions. These, however, were only preliminary drafts developed as a starting point for discussion and will need to be finalized if additional integration is to take place. Most importantly, these detailed process flows will be able to highlight additional decision points to determine what the LWC takes on and for what DCFS must remain responsible.

7.4. Implementation Guidelines

Task	Responsible Office	Activity	Timeframe		
			1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Gather and conduct detailed analysis of STEP and LaJET programmatic requirements, staff and financial resources	WD Office	Research			
Establish a long-term planning process for integration, involve BCBSs	WD Office	Strategic Planning			
Provide technical assistance to BCBSs to better serve low-skill, low educational attainment job-seekers	WD Office	Technical Assistance			
Identify IT systems needs and plan for implementation	WD Office	IT			
Design detailed approach to customize services for STEP and LaJET consumers	WD Office	Operations			

8. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

8.1. Background

Historically, Louisiana has endeavored to align its workforce and economic development initiatives. Even before the passage of the federal Workforce Investment Act, the former Louisiana Workforce Commission through Governor Foster's "Act One" was charged with transforming the state's approaches to providing workforce education and training into a system that was market-driven. At that time, state agency partners adopted a trio of strategies, first of which was to align workforce and economic development efforts.⁶⁹

With the enactment of the state's comprehensive workforce reform legislation (Act 743), Louisiana launched another economic development/workforce development endeavor in its new FastStart program, an initiative led by Louisiana Economic Development (LED) in conjunction with the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS). The FastStart program, modeled on Georgia's QuickStart program, was designed to provide customized employee training as a means of attracting new businesses to and expanding existing businesses in Louisiana. LED describes FastStart's role as "assist[ing] in Louisiana's business recruitment and expansion efforts by fully and definitively addressing a top company concern - the availability of trained/qualified employees."⁷⁰

To date, FastStart has provided customized training for 27 companies; training over 17,000 people. In addition, they have provided customized recruiting and candidate screening for 14 companies.

LWC leadership continues to recognize the importance of workforce and economic development collaboration. In its report to the Streamlining Commission last fall, the LWC pointed out that "alignment between LWC and LED is critical for the state's long-term economic vitality."⁷¹ The Workforce Commission has best summarized the need for a synergistic relationship between LWC and LED in its recent WIA State Plan saying, "LWC cannot place jobseekers in jobs without LED growing the economy, and the economy cannot grow unless LWC addresses Louisiana's workforce gaps."⁷²

8.2. Findings

LWC and LED Planning and Coordination at the Strategic Level

LWC describes its collaborative role with LED as follows:

Both agencies are charged with supporting the growth of Louisiana's economy, LWC by improving its workforce and LED by recruiting businesses to expand or relocate to the state. LWC's role is to help deliver the workforce needed to sustain existing business and industry

and to help them improve the competitiveness of their existing operations. LED's role is to deliver customized solutions to support expansion or relocation projects, which then factor into [the] WIC's occupational forecast. The [agencies] are further aligned through the primary training provider for both, the Louisiana Community and Technical College System.⁷³

While this statement accurately identifies the critical need for collaboration, there are areas at the state strategic level where additional steps can be taken to increase the collaborative efforts between LED and the LWC. Both agencies' programs would benefit from a closer relationship in strategic planning or as economic development legislation is being developed. As noted below, while there are examples of effective collaboration on implementation at the local level, there are instances when the LWC is not advised of LED's work to offer businesses job creation incentives and tax credits, or when job training for these businesses is being developed.

LWC Coordination with Louisiana FastStart

The Louisiana FastStart program works with businesses locating in Louisiana to design turnkey pre-employment and post-employment job training to meet each company's unique needs. Louisiana FastStart has cultivated a relationship with the LWC offices in many local areas. There are very positive examples of collaboration like that in Lake Charles where the LWC and BCSC worked with the FastStart team to plan and hold ConAgra Foods job fairs⁷⁴, distributed information to job-seekers, and encouraged BCSC customers to attend. They were able to provide the Mobile Computer Lab to assist attendees to establish email accounts and complete job applications online. This collaborative effort resulted in over 2,000 job-seekers attending the job fairs.

There remains, however, an opportunity to enhance coordination and strategic planning among LWC and FastStart leaders at the highest levels. The FastStart program could be enhanced by a closer strategic planning effort between LED and the LWC at the outset of program planning.

Economic and Occupational Forecasting Systems

In Act 743, lawmakers clearly establish the state's Labor Market Information (LMI) system as the preeminent data source for Louisiana's workforce development planning. §71D of the Act creates a "comprehensive labor market information system to serve the needs of both [Louisiana's] policymakers and ... citizens in making workforce development and preparation decisions."⁷⁵ The Act goes on to state that the Labor Market Information system "shall be established to provide the council [the WIC] and commission [LWC] with information relevant to policymaking and to provide other agencies and policymakers and citizens with information relevant to program management, administration, and effectiveness with respect to employment opportunities and training."⁷⁶

The LWC administers the Louisiana Occupational Information System (LOIS)/Scorecard which is a virtual labor market information web portal and interactive site that gives users access to the most recent data on Louisiana labor force, wages, population, industry employment, training schools, and training programs. LOIS also provides a scorecard for completion rates, projections, demographics, nonfarm employment, unemployment claimants, industry staffing patterns, licensed occupations, demand occupations, career products, an employer database and a youth web portal.⁷⁷

While the LWC's LMI system and the work of the Occupational Forecasting Conference were intended to drive all of the state's workforce strategies and training priorities, LED primarily uses economic data and workforce projections supplied by Moody's and Economic Modeling Specialists, Incorporated (EMSI), independent research providers who aggregate and analyze data for government and business customers for a fee.

The majority of the data sets provided by EMSI are available through the LWC (with the exception of only a few data points which are available through other public sources). All of EMSI's data on industry, occupation, and demographics are available online through the Louisiana Occupational Information System (LOIS).

In its report to the Streamlining Commission, the LWC notes that it is continuing to work with LED to "improve integration of the data each agency gathers on the economy, labor markets and the needs of existing and emerging businesses and industries."⁷⁸

8.3. Recommendations

In recent years, states across the nation have recognized the need for better integration of their workforce and economic development efforts. The National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices has reviewed several approaches to integration and outlined several basic lessons for states considering workforce and economic development alignment. The NGA Center first recommended that state leaders complete a candid assessment of status quo systems as the essential first step in determining appropriate actions. States were also encouraged to strengthen the quality of the economic and workforce information available to decision-makers and ensure that all leaders are working from the same basic data points. NGA recognized that states successful in their integration efforts also organized economic and workforce development activities around regions and industry clusters to improve labor market performance and used financial incentives and administrative actions to align priorities and resolve differences between economic and workforce development efforts.⁷⁹

There is an opportunity for Louisiana to put several of these strategies into place as it considers additional integration efforts.

Enhance Strategic Planning and Collaboration between LWC and LED

While the LWC and LED properly have distinctive purposes and functions, they should work toward common strategic goals. While there is ad hoc communication between

LED and LWC directors, currently there are no management or operational structures to bring the agencies together apart from the WIC. As noted in Section 2 concerning the organization and structure of the WIC and the LWC, additional collaborative efforts at the agency management level are needed to improve the communication, planning and implementation of programs for which multiple agencies have a role.

- **Review all state workforce and economic development planning goals, strategies and action steps to determine possible areas of coordination, conflict, and redundancy.** Currently, the strategic plans for workforce and economic development efforts in Louisiana present a great opportunity for enhanced coordination. The LWC should begin a strategic review by focusing and standardizing its own internal goals and strategies. At present, the goals cited by the LWC in its WIA State Plan are different from those published by the Workforce Investment Council (WIC). And, the WIC's published goals are distinct from the areas laid out in its own 2010 Strategic Plan. In addition, in its strategic plan, LED enumerates several workforce strategies and outcomes where it sees *itself* – not the LWC – as playing a lead role in “developing robust workforce solutions” for the state” and even “delivering turnkey workforce solutions for new and expanding businesses.”

Launching a detailed review of all workforce-related plans would be a constructive place to focus discussions about economic development and workforce responsibilities at a strategic level; remembering that Act 743 places the LWC and the WIC at the lead in developing workforce strategies for the state.

- **Develop an interagency workforce/economic development plan that clearly establishes roles for each agency built on the Governor's priorities.** It is not only important that workforce and economic development leaders work together to develop strategies, they must also ensure collaboration in the execution of such strategic plans. All state agencies should be working toward a common agenda that reflects the governor's overarching priorities. To accomplish this, the LWC and LED should develop an interagency workforce/economic plan that clearly establishes roles for each agency.

West Virginia, New Mexico, Tennessee: Several governors have recognized the importance of integrating economic development and workforce development efforts and decided to focus the work of their cabinet officials through Jobs Cabinets.⁸⁰ Such groups serve as a forum to bring together the most senior officials in state government to coordinate interagency efforts on the most pressing workforce concerns. Governor Bill Richardson of New Mexico has gone one step further by creating a sector specific effort in his Green Jobs Cabinet. This group is made up of officials from the departments of Workforce Solutions, Economic Development, Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources, Public Education, Higher Education, Environment, Indian Affairs, and Agriculture.⁸¹

Missouri: State leaders in Missouri formed a team among the departments of Economic Development, Labor and Industrial Relations, and Social Services that led to the creation of nine taskforces to examine specific issues and make recommendations for better alignment and coordination of the workforce activities of each agency.⁸²

New Jersey: The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD), together with the executive staffs from several different agencies have formed a core group that meets regularly with private sector companies to facilitate economic development activities and address workforce concerns. Specifically, the team works with industry leaders to address issues related to business expansion, employee retention, and relocation.⁸³

- **Prioritize cooperation between the LWC and LED on meeting the goals of the FastStart program.** One immediate area for enhanced coordination is the LWC's work with the Louisiana FastStart program. This initiative has received praise for the unique pre-employment and post-employment services it provides Louisiana business recruits. As noted earlier, there are examples around the state (Lake Charles) where the LWC and the Business and Career Solutions Centers are working closely with the FastStart program to bring a full array of services to businesses. A closer and more collaborative relationship at a statewide, strategic level would allow LED and the LWC to replicate these successes in other regions of the state. Working closely with all state agencies *from the earliest stages* in the development of legislation or other strategic initiatives (such as developing business incentives) affecting Louisiana's workforce will help target resources where needed to increase FastStart opportunities.
- **Evaluate opportunities to pool targeted workforce and economic development funds toward common strategic goals.** States that have been successful in aligning their workforce and economic development efforts have often done so by pooling grant funding focused on common strategic goals. Louisiana has blended divergent funding streams before in its workforce training programs developed by the Workforce Subcommittee of the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA). The LWC can build upon this practice and target funds toward the goals and strategies that could be developed by a Workforce Development Cabinet Taskforce (recommended for reconstitution earlier in this report) or in a joint economic plan developed by LWC, LED and other state agencies.

Several states have mobilized existing resources, including federal funds such as WIA discretionary dollars, HUD CDBG grants, and HHS TANF funds, to finance collaborative workforce development projects.

Oklahoma: The WIRED for Oklahoma program funds regional planning activities such as the analysis of industry, worker and service provider needs; convening of partners; and the design of regional initiatives through pooled incentive dollars.⁸⁴

Georgia: This state's "Work Ready Regions" program uses combined funds to finance a wide range of regional plan implementation projects, from training, screening and assessment to support services (such as child care and transportation), to facilities and equipment.⁸⁵

Alignment and Coordination of Economic and Occupational Forecasting

The LWC's Labor Market Information (LMI) system produces an extraordinary amount of economic and occupational forecasting data for Louisiana. As stated in Act 743, the LMI system is designed to serve the needs of policymakers in making workforce development decisions and to provide the WIC and other agencies with information relevant to "program management, administration, and effectiveness with respect to employment opportunities and training."⁸⁶

- **Continue to improve coordination of occupational forecasting and other economic/employment data systems that inform workforce and economic policy development.** Currently, representatives from LED participate in the WIC and the Occupational Forecasting Conference (OFC), however the LED uses non-LMI data for their own planning purposes such as data provided by Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. (EMSI). EMSI provides its customers (both public and private sector) with a wide variety of publicly-available economic data sets along with analysis and consultant support to organize the data for simple presentation. Most of EMSI's customers use these data sets because of the simplicity of the interface that the service provides and the analysis tools that complement the data sets.

There may be some perceived confidentiality issues inhibiting the LED from using LMI data and choosing to use the EMSI data sets and services.⁸⁷ While the LWC cannot change the confidentiality requirements of federal law, it should work to ensure that all policymakers understand why there is a distinction between the data currently being used by the LWC, OFC, and LED.

- **Conduct a thorough review of confidentiality issues and ways other states have resolved conflicts so that data can be used to its fullest extent.** If confidentiality is an issue, additional research should be conducted to determine ways other states have resolved such issues. This may require legislative actions which will be determined as a result of a thorough review.
- **Develop an informational "campaign" to ensure all potential audiences are aware of the wealth of data available through LMI and how best it can be used to advance workforce and economic development goals.** Pursuant to

Act 743, the governor and legislature expect that the LWC and the OFC will be the primary source of all labor information used by policymakers throughout the state. While there will always be new and innovative data sources that prove valuable to public policy leaders, decision-makers should be well acquainted with the resources that exist in the LWC LMI system and understand any distinctions in these data sets and others external to the state. LED and any other agencies who utilize external data should present their data to the Occupational Forecasting Conference, not as a contradiction to the LMI data, but instead to provide a full context for the vast data already collected within the state. Economic development leaders at the state and local level should all endeavor to utilize LMI data whenever possible so that there will be consistency in the basic strategic presumptions of all groups. To promote the utilization of LMI data, the LWC should continue to review data integration opportunities with other agencies and make sure that the ultimate products are user-friendly and meet the needs of all customers.

Idaho: As part of a larger effort to improve coordination of economic development and workforce development agencies, Idaho integrated data sources for labor market supply-demand information. In its integration, Idaho surveyed stakeholders in multiple agencies in state government and sought input from a wide variety of businesses to determine how users would apply the data and the format most suitable for application. The Idaho system ultimately combined data from multiple agencies for common use by policymakers statewide.⁸⁸

Missouri: Here, the state created the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) by merging the research divisions of existing workforce development and economic development agencies. MERIC was used not only by state decision-makers but also to provide local workforce investment boards with comprehensive data services for their strategic planning.⁸⁹

8.4. Implementation Guidelines

Task	Responsible Office	Activity	Timeframe		
			1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Reengage economic development leadership in the strategic planning of the LWC and WIC	Executive Director's Office	Strategic Planning	✓		
Compare all state workforce and economic development planning goals, strategies and action steps to determine possible areas of coordination, conflict, and redundancy.	Executive Director's Office	Strategic Planning	✓		
Based on this comparison, develop an interagency workforce/economic plan that clearly establishes roles for each agency and is built on the governor's priorities	Executive Director's Office	Strategic Planning		✓	
Evaluate opportunities to blend funding from workforce, economic development, and educational funding streams to incentivize more collaborative strategic planning in regions across the state.	Executive Director's Office	Operations			✓
Analyze economic and occupational forecasting needs of all policymakers to ensure that current LMI systems can inform decision-making.	Occupational Information Services Office	Research		✓	
Investigate and resolve confidentiality issues concerning use of LMI data	Occupational Information Services Office	Research		✓	
Develop and launch an information campaign to help all potential users understand the availability of LMI data	Occupational Information Services Office	Technical Assistance/Training	✓		

9. LOUISIANA COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

9.1. Background

In the late 1990s, workforce, economic development and educational leaders in Louisiana saw the need for enhanced coordination in their strategic planning and more collaboration in their efforts to grow jobs and the overall economy for the state. With the passage of the “Act One,” State officials began to develop a comprehensive and integrated framework in the state’s workforce and training arenas. At the same time, Louisiana business and industry leaders became more involved in planning and training for the state’s future workforce. In 1998, the legislature established the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS). This legislation provided for a reorganization and expansion of existing institutions, as well as a means for direct-funding of the state’s workforce-oriented educational resources.

According to its most recent Strategic Plan, LCTCS endeavors to “deliver rapid, flexible and innovative training and instruction to address [Louisiana’s] changing workforce needs.”⁹⁰ The Plan further states that the mission of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System is “to prepare Louisiana’s citizens for improved quality of life, workforce success, and continued learning.”⁹¹

The Workforce Investment Council has spoken clearly and consistently about the close relationship that it deems as necessary for LCTCS, the LWC and the Council. The WIC has also been forthright in describing the role that it sees the Council playing (pursuant to Act 743) in the general oversight of all workforce integration activities as well as the development of the state’s workforce training strategies. This can be seen in the November 2009 WIC Position Statement to the Postsecondary Education Reform Commission (PERC) when the WIC members noted that Act 743, not only called for the “integration of workforce development programs and demand-driven service delivery responding to the needs of business and industry,” but also for “strengthening the role of [the] Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS).”⁹²

The WIC Position Statement to the PERC⁹³ goes on to note that:

- The focus of Act 743 was to create “a proper alignment” of educational and other workforce development resources with Louisiana’s workforce needs.
- The WIC is tasked by Act 743 to play a “significant role” in the redesign of the state’s workforce system and address a full range of workforce issues including “aligning all components of [Louisiana’s] education system with [its] workforce needs – from early childhood and Pre-K through high school to [the] technical and community colleges and [the] universities.”
- Louisiana’s higher education system must become more responsive to the state’s identified needs.

- The state’s “strategic imperatives” for better alignment of the state’s higher education resources included:
 - Creating better connections and collaboration between high schools, community and technical colleges, and universities and enhancing the quality and amount of career information and counseling provided to students at all education levels.
 - Developing resources and elevating the status of Associate Degrees and Technical Certificates as a good pathway to high value jobs and to four-year schools.

Integrated Performance Measures in Workforce and Education

Research has long documented the benefits of establishing cross-programmatic performance measures to focus independent agencies on a priority list of common goals. In recent years, many states have put into place common measures for their workforce programs. Now, leading states have begun to move toward multi-tiered measurement models linked to statewide strategic goals, workforce system-building and continuous improvement. The most successful efforts have brought together collaborations of workforce and education professionals along with business representatives, other state agencies, elected officials, and community leaders as partners in the design and integration of performance measures.

In early 2009, the WIC recognized the need for more and better integrated education and workforce measures in Louisiana. In preparation for WIC discussions on this topic, the LWC leadership asked **Public Works** to prepare a primer and best practices scan on integrated performance measures for leadership’s review. In February 2010, **Public Works** submitted a detailed memorandum to the LWC describing the major costs and benefits of workforce and education performance measure integration, citing national best practices for establishing, implementing and tracking such measures. A copy of that memorandum is included in *Attachment 5: Integrated Performance Measures – Workforce, Community and Technical College, and Higher Education*.

9.2. Findings

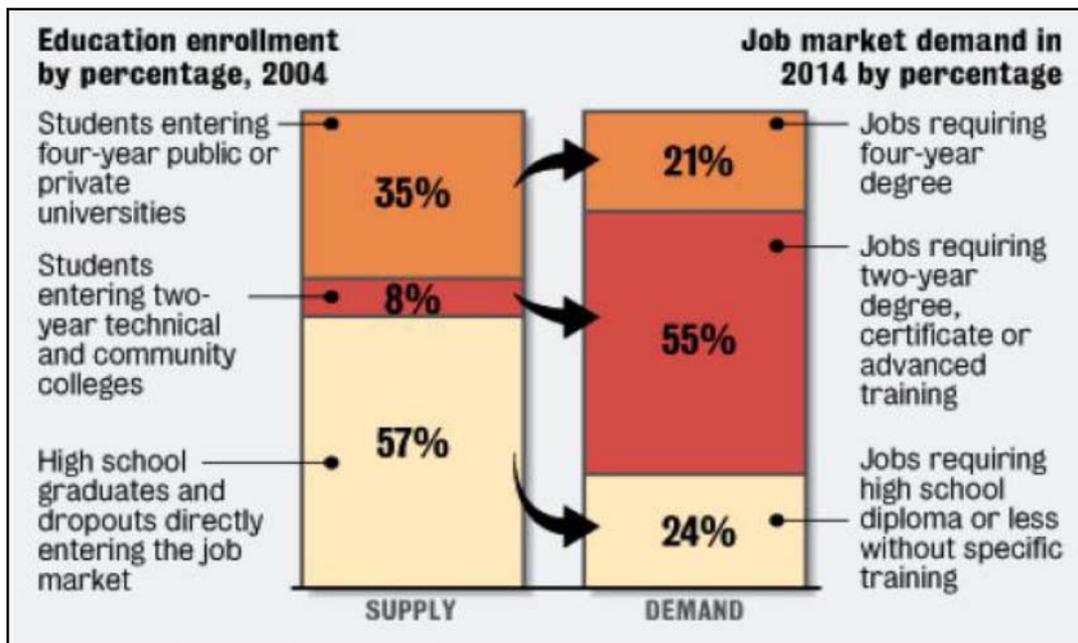
Planning for Louisiana Workforce Training Needs

As noted several times in this report, the presence of a qualified workforce is a primary concern for businesses considering location in Louisiana and an ongoing consideration for existing businesses contemplating expansion in the state. According to LCTCS, nearly 70 percent of businesses considering moving to or expanding in Louisiana cite workforce issues among their greatest concerns.⁹⁴

When describing the most immediate challenges for workforce training in the state, LCTCS often points to a training and education gap that exists today in Louisiana. Education and labor statistics show that in the current job market 55 percent of the jobs available in Louisiana require a two-year degree, certificate or advanced training.

Unfortunately, only 8 percent of Louisiana’s high school graduates are pursuing education beyond high school at one of Louisiana’s community or technical colleges.⁹⁵ Similar data also indicates that 35 percent of Louisiana students are entering four-year degree programs while only 21 percent of the jobs waiting for them will require a four-year degree.⁹⁶ The chart below shows the full comparison of 2004 education enrollment figures versus 2014 job market educational requirements.

Louisiana’s Workforce Pipeline



Source: LCTCS

The WIC Strategic Plan recognize this mismatch in Louisiana’s workforce pipeline and has identified as one of its Strategic Goals to “align postsecondary resources with workforce needs.”⁹⁷ The WIC also lists as one of its recommended implementation strategies to “increase marketing/promotion of associate and technical programs.”⁹⁸

While the Louisiana Workforce Commission is designated in Act 743 as the lead planning body for the state’s job training and workforce strategies, more needs to be done to move from planning to actively addressing workforce pipeline issues. While LCTCS meets regularly with representatives from Louisiana Economic Development (LED), communications and planning with LWC staff are not as robust. For example, LCTCS and FastStart staff members are in almost daily contact discussing job training strategies to recruit new businesses to the state. The LWC was part of such larger policy and state planning activities in the past, however the LWC has been much less involved recently.

Integrated Performance Measures in Workforce and Education

The LWC and WIC recognize the value of integrated performance measures and has recently formalized a WIC committee to advise LWC and LCTCS on the development and implementation of integrated performance measures. The WIC has established an Interagency Workgroup on Workforce Performance Measures which is exploring ways to align education and workforce goals, objectives and measurements for performance. Since its inception, the Workgroup has made some progress in its assessments of potential measures; however, the group would benefit from additional staffing support for consistent and timely follow through needed to develop specific performance measurements.

9.3. Recommendations

Planning for Louisiana Workforce Training Needs

- **Examine current strategic goals of education, economic development and workforce development agencies to focus all efforts around common priorities.** As discussed earlier in this report, there are considerable opportunities for the LWC to enhance strategic planning and collaboration with Louisiana Economic Development (LED). The same is true for the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS). Louisiana workforce and educational leaders (K-12, LCTCS and Regents) should work together to review all workforce-related efforts currently underway. Relying on the authority of Act 743, the LWC should be at the table when LCTCS and economic development groups (both state and local) are making decisions about workforce training. While it is appropriate for LCTCS to have independent meetings with other partners, the LWC staff (particularly LMI staff) and the WIC should be primary partners when LCTCS is considering strategic direction for how best to focus their efforts to address job training needs for the state.

Montana: Similar to Louisiana, workforce, economic development, and educational leaders in Montana found themselves working toward divergent sets of strategic goals and objectives. In an effort to strengthen governance and accountability within the workforce system, Montana worked to bring economic development and educational organizations together to devise integrated and comprehensive strategies. In its coordinated planning, Montana officials also identified state agency organizational options and policy waivers that could improve coordination and enhance the effectiveness of the workforce system.⁹⁹

- **Enhance interagency involvement in WIC meetings and new recommended WIC committees.** The LWC should consider ways to reengage education, economic development, and other agency stakeholders in meaningful planning

with the Workforce Investment Council (WIC). The current mismatch in student educational enrollment compared to the job market needs of the future offers the LWC and WIC a unique opportunity to engage other partners in meaningful collaborative planning. As the strategic lead for workforce planning and job training in the state, the LWC and the WIC should be active participants in this and all discussions about Louisiana's workforce pipeline.

The new WIC committees recommended in this report could also present the WIC with another avenue to engage policymakers in other agencies. The committees will provide a venue for WIC members to bring in subject-matter experts for focused discussions on a variety of topics. LCTCS leadership should play a vital role in informing the work of any new committees, particularly those focused on issues related to job training.

- **Appoint a senior LWC executive to lead coordination of education and workforce collaboration efforts.** Interagency and interdisciplinary cooperation cannot end simply with better and more meaningful strategic planning. Coordinated planning is a great accomplishment that means little if there is not also coordinated implementation. The LWC should designate a member of its LWC leadership team to manage these important collaboration efforts. Presently, integration efforts are ad hoc activities with no consistent strategy or accountability established. At many points during this assessment, questions about interagency work with LCTCS and LED had to be referred to senior management to understand if, and how, the agencies were working together.

Successful integration efforts require an empowered leader within the LWC to lead the charge. The LWC may choose to focus this person's attention exclusively on the interagency work between LWC and LCTCS, or may choose to broaden the executive's portfolio to include integration efforts with LED, DCFS or other agencies. Either way, the individual should focus exclusively on interagency strategic planning and, then just as importantly, interagency implementation. As a priority assignment, this staff member could be charged with ensuring the integrated performance measures discussed in the last recommendation become a reality.

Pennsylvania: Governor Ed Rendell directed the Deputy Secretary of Workforce Development in the state's Department of Labor and Industry to oversee alignment issues among five state agencies, including the Departments of Education, Community and Economic Development, Labor and Industry, Public Welfare, and Aging.¹⁰⁰ Louisiana should consider a similar approach to coordinating integration activities. Act 743 directed the LWC to consider an expansive list of integration options throughout the state. Both the Commission and the WIC would benefit from having a single point of contact to address the many issues that arise in developing and maintaining these collaborative relationships.

- **Continue to align regional planning efforts between LCTCS and the LWC.** Improved planning and implementation coordination needs to take place around the state, recognizing the uniqueness of each region of the state. The LWC should explore opportunities to partner with LCTCS and other education, economic development, and community leaders in every region of the state. While the LWC has launched several initiatives to encourage regional planning, priorities, and sectors, more can always be done. Collaboration on a regional level will help identify the actions being taken by the LWC and other agencies in developing plans and initiatives with local partners. This type of collaboration resulted in agency staff discovering that both LCTCS and the LWC were working simultaneously to develop Career Coaching models for schools around the state. Agency staff were able to compare models and have since shared best practices from each model.

Because systems are dynamic, finding opportunities to work together is an ongoing exercise. This is especially the case when trying to meet the unique requirements of different regional areas of the state. Coordination could be as simple as holding joint “town hall meetings” on a topic of common interest (rather than each agency hosting its own series of regional meetings). LWC should consider ways to organize regional outreach with LCTCS and state agencies so that collaborative relationships are in place well before workforce or economic problems or crises arise.

Oregon: The State of Oregon established local Workforce Response Teams (WRTs) to bring together workforce and community college officials with local leaders to focus on the development of training for local jobs. The WRTs are proactive resource teams made up of representatives from the Employment Department, community colleges, WIA service providers, local economic development organizations, the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department Regional Development Officer, and other representatives selected by the region. Oregon chose to establish 15 WRTs, one in each workforce region of the state. Each WRT works together to set regional priorities for the use of funding and also control and award grants to businesses. The teams also provide comprehensive business solutions and develop strategies to work with multiple employers in a sector and/or cluster to maximize regional and statewide impacts.¹⁰¹

Integrated Performance Measures in Workforce and Education

- **Prioritize the WIC Interagency Workgroup on Workforce Performance Measures and reach consensus on integrated performance measurements among education and workforce agencies and stakeholders.** As noted earlier, the WIC established an Interagency Workgroup on Workforce Performance Measures in early 2010 to explore ways to align education and workforce goals, objectives and measurements for performance. The efforts of

this Workgroup should continue and become a priority for the WIC. Act 743 places the WIC at the helm of all workforce and job training strategy development in the state.

The first step for the Workgroup will be to assemble an initial (draft) list of performance measures. When developing integrated performance measures, states need to focus on a few primary issues including:

1. **Authority:** States must establish roles and responsibilities and ensure the lead agency collecting data has the authority to do so.
2. **Simplicity:** Measures need to be simple and straightforward – What do policymakers want to know? The measures are not day-to-day performance measures; they are measures that identify performance in language understandable to lawmakers and the public.
3. **Information Technology:** While it is technically possible to create entirely new systems, it is not usually financially feasible. Many states have, therefore, established data warehousing capabilities that allow for administrative record matches. These matches seem entirely sufficient to meet most of the demands for information for key stakeholders and policymakers.

After initial performance measures are identified, then the WIC Workgroup can share the draft measures with other education and workforce stakeholders in the state to build consensus before the measures are put into place. Stakeholder groups should be asked not only to sign-off on the measures, but also to have input into the drafting of objectives, goals, and integrated measures. This step will be essential to developing buy-in from those who will be responsible for producing the results that the integrated measures are designed to capture.

Washington: The State of Washington established one of the nation's best models for integrated performance measurement. When determining which measures it would ultimately use, Washington officials conducted very thorough outreach to stakeholders in every discipline to be measured.

Washington: Integrated Performance Measures¹⁰²

Accountability Measures	
Category	Measure
<p>Labor Market Results for Program Participants: Do people get jobs? • What are they paid?</p>	<p>1. Short-term Employment Rate: The percentage of participants who are employed during the second quarter after exit. (For youth, enrollment in education counts as well as employment.)</p> <p>2. Long-term Employment Rate: The percentage of participants who are employed during the fourth quarter after exit. (For youth, enrollment in education counts as well as employment.)</p> <p>3. Earnings Level: Median earnings during the 2nd quarter after exit among all exiters with earnings.</p>
<p>Skill Gains: To what extent do education levels increase?</p>	<p>4. Credential Completion Rate: The percentage of exiters who have completed a certificate, degree, diploma, licensure, or industry-recognized credential during participation or within one year of exit.</p>
<p>Results for Employers and the Economy: Are we meeting the needs of employers?</p>	<p>5. Repeat Employer Customers: The percentage of employers who are served who return to the same program for service within one year.</p>
Performance Indicators	
Category	Measure
<p>Results for Employers and the Economy: Are we meeting the needs of employers?</p>	<p>6. Employer Market Penetration: The percentage of all employers who are served during one year.</p>
<p>Return on Investment: What is the return on the investment?</p>	<p>7. Taxpayer Return on Investment: The net impact on tax revenue and social welfare payments compared to the cost of the services.</p> <p>8. Participant Return on Investment: The net impact on participant earnings and employer-provided benefits compared to the cost of the services.</p>

9.4. Implementation Guidelines

Task	Responsible Office	Activity	Timeframe		
			1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Examine strategic goals of education, economic development, and workforce agencies; focus on common priorities	Executive Director's Office	Strategic Planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Consider opportunities to improve interagency involvement in WIC meetings, including WIC subcommittee involvement	Executive Director's Office	Strategic Planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Appoint a senior LWC executive to lead integration planning and implementation.	Executive Director's Office	Strategic Planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Determine opportunities for interagency regional planning and outreach	Executive Director's Office	Operations		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Consider development of interagency WF Response Teams	WD Office	Strategic Planning			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Continue planning work of WIC Interagency Workgroup on Performance Measures	Executive Director's Office	Strategic Planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
WIC develops recommendations for common measures in conjunction with other education & workforce stakeholders	Executive Director's Office	Strategic Planning		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

10. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The State of Louisiana is well positioned to make significant improvements to its workforce development system. In 2008, the Governor and Legislature put in place comprehensive legislation to lay the groundwork for an integrated system that involves the many stakeholders who have a role in ensuring Louisiana has a workforce for the 21st century. In the past year, the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council and the Louisiana Workforce Commission have begun the difficult task of making the vision a reality. The LWC has:

- Restructured local service delivery areas to help WIBs and BCSCs work together more effectively on a regional basis.
- Designed a service delivery model that focuses local efforts to: engage, empower and employ – a model designed to better serve all job-seekers who come to the BCSCs for help.
- Revamped its Labor Market Information systems to produce robust and comprehensive data sets to inform decision-making.
- Taken on the consolidation of Louisiana Rehabilitative Services into the LWC.

These major initiatives are only highlights of the extensive list of activities that the LWC has been working on in the past year. It should not be forgotten that these types of initiatives are being implemented at a time of unprecedented unemployment rates around the country and the largest oil spill in the history of the United States just off the shores of Louisiana. These disasters – natural and man-made – have had a significant impact on workforce services in the state. In the face of these unparalleled challenges, the LWC has managed to keep moving forward.

This review conducted by **Public Works** and **Seedco** is another step to move forward. We were able to conduct an extensive review of legislation, documents, policies and procedures, and talk with numerous people throughout the system who shared their ideas, opinions, challenges and hopes for the future. This analysis, coupled with ideas from around the country, form the basis for our recommendations that touch on every aspect of the workforce system in Louisiana.

Table 3: Summary of Recommendations is list of the 64 recommendations in this report. The recommendations cover eight major areas of policy and operations in the diverse workforce system in Louisiana. The 64 recommendations produced 80 possible actions the LWC and its partner agencies can undertake to implement the recommendations. These action steps are listed in **Table 4: Implementation Guidelines** and are organized by type of activity and estimated length of time needed for implementation. We hope that this review and the summary of recommendations and possible action steps will be used by the WIC, the LWC and partner agencies to make decisions on next steps that will significantly move the state forward.

Table 3: Summary of Recommendations

Program Area	Recommendations
<u>Organization and Structure</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reestablish the Workforce Development Cabinet 2. Establish committees to engage WIC members, better use the authority of the WIC to support initiatives, and increase opportunities for additional resource people to be involved in key areas. 3. Establish more capacity within LWC to staff key initiatives through the appointment of a Strategic Initiatives Work Group.
<u>Local Service Delivery</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Retrain BCSC staff to ensure uniform understanding of the model, and establish regular train-the-trainer sessions for each region 5. Encourage local flexibility in service implementation efforts and develop customized training and/or technical assistance for rural and urban regions. 6. Invest in cross-training efforts within each BCSC. 7. Clarify roles and responsibilities of Recruitment and Placement teams and Business Services Representatives. 8. Prioritize employers as primary customers of the system and increase the capacity of recruitment and Placement teams and BSRs to perform job development duties. 9. Build a talent pipeline made up of properly educated, skilled, and prepared job-seekers who are available to compete in local and regional economies. 10. Use data to identify target sectors, develop expertise in particular industries, engage employers, coordinate information and resources, and implement effective responses in each region.

11. Conduct an outreach strategy to employers to avoid misconceptions and to educate them about BCSC services.
12. Add training services geared to entrepreneurship and small business to the portfolio of services provided by the BCSCs.
13. Invest in internal communication systems upfront to alleviate future questions and concerns.
14. Gather local input in determining community needs.
15. Invest in enhancing IT systems to improve capacity to accurately capture data and report outcomes
16. Improve the reporting capabilities and functionality of LAVOS.
17. Infuse job retention strategies throughout the service-delivery system
18. Emphasize program quality, outcomes, and accountability at the BCSC level.
19. Promote a culture of continuous learning and skill development.
20. Develop an approach to local oversight that supports local service delivery and rewards excellence.
21. Connect newly employed customers to work supports and other services:
22. Build the LWC leadership and BCSC buy-in to partnering.
23. Ensure alignment of WIB and BCSC goals and incentives
24. Consider incentives for partnerships
25. Tap into informal existing relationships with community groups.

26. Target a mix of large and small partners with varying capacities and contributions.
27. Establish clear, realistic goals as a group
28. Acknowledge past unsatisfactory experience with partnerships

Community Services Block Grants

29. Develop a strategic planning process to inform decisions on how CSBG funds are distributed or spent.
30. Increase discretionary funding to target state priorities
31. Develop guidelines to better direct how CAAs conduct planning activities and operations
32. Review the contracting process with CAAs and find ways to streamline approval without losing any integrity in the system
33. Develop a comprehensive and ongoing plan of communication with CAAs

Reemployment

34. Develop systems that enable BCSC staff to better serve UI claimants until broader UI system issues are resolved by the state
35. Redefine process for serving UI applicants based on models from best practice states.
36. Reinstate the process that required UI applicants to register at the BCSC before receiving benefits.
37. Provide technical assistance to BCSCs to help them develop the model that works best.
38. Make better use of LMI information to help job-seekers.

39. Review call center operations and develop a plan for improvement in both staff response and technology.

Rehabilitative Services

40. Use LRS transition as an opportunity to enhance collaboration between workforce and vocational rehabilitation staff at every level.
41. Prioritize elements of LRS transition that will ensure compliance, minimize disruption to consumers, and ultimately improve services.
42. Develop an internal referral process for LRS clients in Groups III - V who are not currently being served by LRS, but who could be supported by the LWC
43. Build upon current successes and align business outreach and engagement efforts of the LWC Business Service Representatives (BSRs) and LRS Rehabilitation Development Specialists (REDS).
44. Better leverage federal Vocational Rehabilitation funding opportunities by developing more third-party agreements with other state agencies.
45. Conduct a state funding match survey of all potentially-eligible LWC, LRS, and partner agency funds.

Department of Children and Family Services

46. Establish a multi-year plan for integration if the ultimate goal is to consolidate programs
47. Develop a thorough analysis of program participants and available resources.
48. Develop a Memorandum of Understanding to identify roles and responsibilities of the LWC and DCFS.
49. Review findings and lessons learned from LaJET Pilot

50. Develop short- and long-term IT system improvements.
51. Establish a planning process to engage local WIBs in planning for coordination and/or eventual consolidation.
52. Develop a detailed implementation plan to customize services for STEP/LaJET customers in the BCSC system.

Economic Development

53. Review all state workforce and economic development planning goals, strategies and action steps to determine possible areas of coordination, conflict, and redundancy.
54. Develop an interagency workforce/economic development plan that clearly establishes roles for each agency built on the Governor's priorities.
55. Prioritize the review and development of ways in which LWC and LED can work together to meet the goals of the FastStart program.
56. Evaluate opportunities to pool targeted workforce and economic develop funds toward common strategic goals.
57. Continue to improve coordination of occupational forecasting and other economic/employment data systems that inform workforce and economic development policy development.
58. Conduct a thorough review of confidentiality issues and ways other states have resolved conflicts so that data can be used to its fullest extent.
59. Develop an informational "campaign" to ensure all potential audiences are aware of the wealth of data available through LMI and how best it can be used to advance workforce and economic development goals.

Louisiana Community and Technical College System

60. Examine current strategic goals of education, economic development and workforce development agencies to focus all efforts around common priorities.
61. Enhance interagency involvement in WIC meetings and new recommended WIC subcommittees.
62. Appoint a senior LWC executive to lead coordination of education and workforce collaboration efforts.
63. Continue to align regional planning efforts between LCTCS and the LWC.
64. Prioritize the WIC Interagency Workgroup on Workforce Performance Measures and reach consensus on integrated performance measurements among education and workforce agencies and stakeholders.

Table 4: Implementation Guidelines By Type of Activity Required

Activity: Strategic Planning

Program Area	Activity	1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Organization and Structure	Work with the Governor's Office to establish a Workforce Development Cabinet			
Organization and Structure	Work with the WIC to establish committee structure			
Service Delivery	Direct WIBs to determine approaches for how to take a more active role in supporting employer relationship-building efforts at BCSCs. Establish incentive programs to reward regions that demonstrate investments in improving employer services or effective sector-driven strategies.			
Service Delivery	Help BCSCs assess systems for offering skills upgrade training to customers that is linked to established and recognized credentials and/or college credit. If the BCSC is unable to provide these trainings itself, partnerships with local training providers should be developed and referrals tracked..			
Service Delivery	Task WIBs with overseeing community-based partnership development activities in their local areas/regions			
CSBG	Develop priorities for CSBG Discretionary Funds			
Reemployment	Conduct a targeted, fast-track strategic planning initiative to work with BCSCs on model for handling UI claimants			
LRS	Continue work of Dept of Education and Dept of Corrections Work Groups re: possible voc rehab third-party agreements			
LED	Reengage economic development leadership in the strategic planning of the LWC and WIC			
LED	Compare all state workforce and economic development planning goals, strategies and action steps to determine possible areas of coordination, conflict, and redundancy.			

Program Area	Activity	1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
LCTCS	Examine strategic goals of education, economic development, and workforce agencies; focus on common priorities	✓		
LCTCS	Consider opportunities to improve interagency involvement in WIC meetings, including WIC subcommittee involvement	✓		
LCTCS	Appoint a senior LWC executive to lead integration planning and implementation.	✓		
LCTCS	Continue planning work of WIC Interagency Workgroup on Performance Measures	✓		
Organization and Structure	Launch a planning process, in conjunction with appropriate WIC committee and representatives from local WIBs/BCSCs, to develop local performance objectives, reporting, monitoring plan and publishing of results		✓	
Service Delivery	Identify partners that will enhance core WIA offerings. Target effective CBOs that provide services that are not adequately addressed through the BCSC and that complement current service offerings.		✓	
LRS	Develop internal referral processes for regional BCSC and LRS staff		✓	
LRS	Conduct brainstorming meetings with other state agencies about partnership opportunities with LRS		✓	
LED	Based on this comparison, develop an interagency workforce/economic plan that clearly establishes roles for each agency and is built on the governor's priorities		✓	
LCTCS	WIC develops recommendations for common measures in conjunction with other education & workforce stakeholders		✓	
LRS	Conduct a funding match survey to identify possibilities to enhance state matching funds			✓
DCFS	Establish a long-term planning process for integration, involve BCBSs			✓
LCTCS	Consider development of proactive interagency WF Response Teams			✓

Activity: Technical Assistance/Training

Program Area	Activity	1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Organization and Structure	Alert WIBs and FLAT committee representatives that they will be tasked with leading regional professional development efforts to decentralize training demands (or identify other entities that the LWC chooses to spearhead efforts).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Service Delivery	Develop quarterly/bi-annual training calendar for BCSCs (blend of statewide and regional offerings). Priorities include 1) retraining on the model 2) building the capacity of staff to become more demand-driven in their work.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
DCFS	Provide technical assistance to BCBSs to better serve low-skill, low educational attainment job-seekers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
LED	Develop and launch an information campaign to help all potential users understand the availability of LMI data	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Reemployment	Provide technical assistance to BCSCs to implement model best suited for the area		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Service Delivery	Develop written guidelines and instructions for how BCSCs can re-think service delivery approaches while still meeting certification standards.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Service Delivery	Begin holding centralized statewide professional development 'conferences' as well as locally-driven workshops and trainings within each region.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Service Delivery	Provide one-on-one technical assistance to help BCSCs learn from each other, overcome internal issues that affect efficiency/quality, and cross-train staff.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Service Delivery	Implement train-the-trainer sessions with BSRs and BCSC Recruitment and Placement teams to build job development skills of staff and relationships with other business-serving entities in communities).		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Program Area	Activity	1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Service Delivery	Develop an entrepreneur start-up check list to help BCSC staff provide information about key aspects of starting a business in Louisiana (choosing a business structure, registering a business, permits and licenses needed, and how to obtain them)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
CSBG	Develop guidelines for conducting Needs Assessment		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
CSBG	Provide technical assistance to CAAs to conduct Needs Assessment		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
CSBG	Develop written policies and procedures for CSBG program		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Reemployment	Launch training sessions to assist BCSCs with interpretation and use of LMI data		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Reemployment	Plan and conduct targeted staff training		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
LRS	Organize opportunities for LWC BSRs and LRS REDS to share business outreach and engagement strategies		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Service Delivery	Develop comprehensive job development guidelines for Recruitment and Placement teams and BSRs to utilize.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Service Delivery	Identify pilot initiatives that make sense for BCSCs, CAAs, and FBCOs to test together in their region.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Activity: Operations

Program Area	Activity	1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Organization and Structure	Identify staff to form a Strategic Initiatives Work Group	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Service Delivery	Survey BCSCs to gather ideas on 1) how Centers can be more flexible with implementing the model, and 2) training/technical assistance needs.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Service Delivery	Encourage BCSC Directors to carve out time for staff to meet regularly to discuss service planning activities, communication, coordination, and tracking services/outcomes between teams.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Service Delivery	Convene CAAs and BCSCs together for a statewide ‘kick-off’ meeting to launch a new era of collaboration between WIA and CSBG.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Service Delivery	Set up regional meeting schedules between CAAs and BCSCs so that they can begin to develop common goals and objectives.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
CSBG	Provide notice to CAAs of new plan for discretionary funds	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
LRS	Review LRS Transition Work Plan and prioritize legal, finance compliance issues	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
LRS	Establish new timeline for remaining Transition action items	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Service Delivery	Send out mass email/letter from LWC leadership articulating goals and clarifying points of contact within LWC. Then make calls to WIBs and BCSC directors to articulate new communication processes (including turnaround times for getting questions answered by LWC), confirm contact information, and answer questions.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Service Delivery	Develop “cheat sheet” for BCSCs to use to navigate points of contact within LWC’s Baton Rouge offices.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

Program Area	Activity	1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Service Delivery	Support CAAs and BCSCs to ensure that they clarify roles and responsibilities and mobilize to develop a realistic, outcomes-driven plan of action.		✓	
Service Delivery	Assess job development capacity of each Center.		✓	
Service Delivery	Analyze current client flow at BCSCs to identify existing gaps in retention service delivery and identify areas to infuse or enhance job-seeker retention services. Consider implementing a benefits access approach such as <i>EarnBenefits</i> .		✓	
Service Delivery	Identify re-engagement strategies for customers successfully placed into jobs to keep them connected to the BCSC.		✓	
Service Deliver	Streamline forms to better capture WIA and Wagner Peyser information in one place to save time and effort for reporting outcomes.		✓	
Service Delivery	Determine statewide/regional strategies to better market BCSC facilities and resources to employers. Ensure Centers have an adequate supply of marketing materials.		✓	
CSBG	Review and streamline contracting process		✓	
Reemployment	Review and improve call center operations		✓	
LCTCS	Determine opportunities for interagency regional planning and outreach		✓	
Service Delivery	Develop common referral forms, tools, definitions, management reports, reporting schedules, and data collection processes.			✓
Service Delivery	Develop comprehensive job development guidelines for the Recruitment and Placement team that specify: resources to identify potential employers; purpose and focus of initial and ongoing letters, email/phone communications with prospective employers; how to attract employers to BCSC programs; and long-term business engagement strategies.			✓

Program Area	Activity	1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Service Delivery	Develop common referral forms, tools, definitions, management reports, reporting schedules, and data collection processes.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DCFS	Design detailed approach to customize services for STEP and LaJET consumers			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
LED	Evaluate opportunities to blend funding from workforce, economic development, and educational funding streams to incentivize more collaborative strategic planning in regions across the state			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Activity: Monitoring/Support

Program Area	Activity	1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
CSBG	Design LWC monitoring and oversight plan for CAAs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
CSBG	Revise and implement plan to communicate with CAAs		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Activity: Information Technology

Program Area	Activity	1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
Reemployment	Modify UI information system to allow BCSCs Read-Only access	✓		
DCFS	Identify IT systems needs and plan for implementation		✓	
Service Delivery	Research distance learning technology and social networking systems to determine if they can have a positive impact for the state.			✓
Service Delivery	Provide regular professional development to staff to increase their IT trouble-shooting skills and build internal computer literacy.		✓	
Service Delivery	Reassess IT support to see how BCSCs can receive more timely assistance when systems crash and to ensure accuracy of records in LAVOS.		✓	
Service Delivery	Assess how information is presented to employers logging into LAVOS; ensure employers understand that they need to contact BCSCs to get candidate screening services. Add features that quickly note when a candidate is applying on their own compared to a BCSC staff referral.		✓	
Service Delivery	Create a quick reference LAVOS Desk Guide for front-line staff to reference when entering information into the system or running reports.		✓	
Service Delivery	Make enhancements to LAVOS so that the system better directs users' to job-seeker versus employer services; create new methods to track customer loyalty (e.g. employers that come to events are not captured in LAVOS).		✓	
Service Delivery	Invest in new computers for BCSCs with particularly old hardware; identify software needs for CAAs.			✓

Activity: Research

Program Area	Activity	1 – 3 Months	3 – 6 Months	6 – 12 Months
LED	Analyze economic and occupational forecasting needs of all policymakers to ensure that current LMI systems can inform decision-making.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
LED	Investigate and resolve confidentiality issues concerning use of LMI data		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
DCFS	Gather and conduct detailed analysis of STEP and LaJET programmatic requirements, staff and financial resources			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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