



United States of America

Workforce Investment Boards

Framework and setting

- Geographic scale** Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) are established for every state and local area in the US and its territories. There are 593 local WIBs and 53 State and territorial WIBs. The total size of the labour force is 147,000,000. The boundaries of areas served by WIBs vary but every part of the US is within the jurisdiction of a WIB.
- Policy framework** The WIBs are established and funded by the Workforce Investment Act, which was enacted in August 1998. The Act defines the overarching policy framework for the workforce system, WIB membership and WIB responsibilities and provides a primary funding stream via state government to each local WIB. In addition to this primary funding stream, WIBs are charged with the administration and/or implementation of a variety of other funding sources.

Partnerships at work

- Rationale** A WIB's role is to provide leadership and oversight for workforce investment activities that increase employment, retention and earnings. Additionally, the WIBs increase the occupational skill attainment of the nation's workforce to rise and maintain the productivity, competitiveness and economic viability of the nation. A core mission for WIBs is to form partnerships among public workforce agencies and business so that the workforce system is responsive to the needs of business and the community.
- Objectives** The main objective is to create strong local partnerships between business and the community that create systemic responses to each community's economic development and workforce needs. The goal of the partnerships is to enhance the skill sets and earning potential of citizens, including those who are unemployed or who have special needs and provide employers with skilled workers.
- Functions** The WIB's overarching responsibility is to convene the stakeholders and form partnerships to create and implement a viable strategic action plan for workforce services in each community. To fulfil this broad role the WIBs develop partnerships among the stakeholders such as education and industry leaders, stay abreast of economic and labour market information, identify the primary needs of the community and target its available resources to those priorities. The WIB administers the grant funds it receives directly to achieve the objectives stated above and identifies other resources that can be deployed for communities' priorities.
- Policy areas** The Act provides a global policy framework that encompasses education, training, economic development and provides funding for adults, dislocated workers (recently unemployed) and youth. The Act also combines a number of separate grants that serve citizens and those with special needs. The Act is geared to all citizens and significant portions of the funds are targeted to disadvantaged and skill deficient citizens.
- Policy tools/ Instruments** Local WIBs maintain an advocacy/convening role with business and partners and provide information and workforce policy guidance. Local WIBs oversee the operations of facilities called One Stop Career Centers through which services (labour exchange, career assessment, literacy, occupational and other training that give support to industry initiatives, business services and support services) are provided to citizens and employers. State WIBs offer broad policy guidance and provide the grant planning and operations infrastructure.
- Timeframe** WIBs were established in 1998 and evolved from entities prescribed by the Job Training Partnership Act called Private Industry Councils that was enacted in 1981.
- Partners** A board membership is prescribed by the Act and requires representatives from business, the economic development agency, labour unions, workforce agencies, social services, community colleges, the K-12 educational system, and community based non-profit organisations among others.

- Contracts** Each WIB creates an operational plan and receives an allocation of funds via formula. Each WIBs grant is administered at the state level. Each WIB enters into contractual arrangements as needed to operators of One Stops, training providers, etc.
- Legal status** WIBs are predominantly non-profit corporations or associated with a government jurisdiction.
- Sources of Financing** The primary funding source is the Workforce Investment Act, but WIBs often generate funding from local and state government, demonstration grants, foundation grants, grants administered by other public agencies and, to a lesser degree, fees for services.
- Results** During the fiscal year 2005 (1 July 2005 – 30 June 2006), the Department of Labor reported that WIBs served via Workforce Investment Act funds 1,055,000 people (42% adults, 28% youth and 30% dislocated workers). Additionally, 1,167,000 persons filed for employment assistance. Each WIB is measured against standards for 17 performance measures that relate to earnings, employment, retention, skill attainment and customer satisfaction. For example, 76% of program exiters entered employment after programme services.

Partnerships' highlight

- Programme/Project** Demand Driven Incubator Sites (representing an activity that many WIBs currently pursue and is a good example of what WIB partnerships can accomplish).
- Timeframe** 1 July 2005 – 30 June 2006
- Objectives** Strengthen existing WIBs with strong business services and industry initiatives and make their experience available to other WIBs.
- Activities** The Department of Labour, Employment and Training Administration awarded the demonstration grant. WIBs received individual grants to strengthen and expand their existing business services and targeted industry initiatives. WIBs selected as Incubator sites created partnerships among business and stakeholders in a community to address a critical workforce need. The initiatives typically generated training for both new and incumbent workers, system development resources and activities that would not have been possible with grant funds alone. Types of initiatives include the expansion of nursing education slots to meet a critical shortage in Texas, the retraining of unemployed and underemployed workers so they were qualified for jobs with a major defence contractor and the creation of an operating partnership among a community college, an economic development agency and a WIB to deliver a palette of business services easily accessible to business and at one comprehensive location. These best practices were packaged and shared via conference workshops, computer based seminars and written materials.
- Results** Programme outcomes related to the Incubator sites were related to their provision of technical assistance and outreach to other WIBs. All WIBs also met all 17 Workforce Investment Act performance measure standards.

Contacts

Partnership co-ordination at national / sub-regional level

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