

national business learning partnership

Doing Business on the Gulf Coast

The WorkSource: A Study in Success

Gulf Coast
Workforce Board



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Second Edition

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About the National Business Learning Partnership

The National Business Learning Partnership (NBLP) has matched local workforce areas that have exceeded their performance standards while delivering effective business services with local sites that wish to improve their performance by engaging businesses more successfully.

Nineteen mentor and twenty-five protégé workforce areas participate in the project. A protégé site is matched with a mentor to help develop a work plan to accelerate transition to a demand-driven system. The matches are made by the protégé sites based in part on traditional factors, such as urban or rural nature, demand occupations, industry needs, population, unemployment rates, and on additional factors, such as strategic approach, service delivery design and organizational requirements and capabilities.

One-on-one consultation and case studies are provided through the NBLP. NBLP mentor and protégé sites work together. Protégé sites are encouraged to work with more than one mentor site depending on needs. Similarly, a mentor may consult with more than one site.

In addition to peer-to-peer consultation, NBLP case studies provide a wider audience access to the partners' experiences and learning. Each case study includes practices and principles proven by mentors and protégés to improve performance outcomes by addressing the workforce needs of businesses and industries in our communities. A brief "guide" is included as a part of each case study to facilitate shared learning and promote action.

The NBLP is a collaborative effort among the forty-four State and local WIBs, all ETA Regional offices and the Business Relations Group to facilitate the transition to a demand-driven system, accelerate improvements and encourage innovation.

Acknowledgements

The National Business Learning Partnership (NBLP) is grateful to the forty-four State and local Workforce Investment Boards who opened their doors, welcomed their peers and shared their insights and experiences in creating demand-driven business service organizations. One key goal of NBLP is to demonstrate and document through case studies how these organizations have become demand-driven in more effectively and efficiently serving the workforce needs of business while helping workers find good jobs at good wages. NBLP would like to thank these organizations for helping in the development of these case studies that will ultimately aid other areas in transitioning to a demand-driven system.

NBLP is especially appreciative for the strategic leadership provided by DOL Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training, Emily Stover DeRocco, for her vision and resourcefulness in the development of a demand-driven and innovative 21st century workforce system.

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Project Manager, Nick Lalpui, under the direction of Regional Administrator, Joseph Juarez; for assistance from ETA's Business Relations Group; and for the tireless efforts of ETA's NBLP regional representatives nationwide.

In a demand-driven system, partnerships of federal, State and local organizations and individuals are required to effectively assist businesses and the workforce to adapt to the challenges of the 21st century. We are proud that NBLP exemplifies such a partnership which continues to grow and strengthen by continuing to identify workforce challenges and implementing and sharing demand-driven solutions.

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How to Use this Case Study

The National Business Learning Partnership goals are to facilitate the transition to a demand-driven system, accelerate improvements and encourage innovations. To accomplish these goals, each case study documents the development of a partner's demand-driven workforce investment system with stories, practices and principles illustrating the successes (and challenges).

“Doing Business on the Gulf Coast” highlights numerous Coast Workforce Board achievements. With the understanding that each WIBs’ opportunities arise from its own unique circumstance, the writer provides some lessons learned, landmines and windfalls.

To explore how your organization may benefit from the Gulf Coast Workforce Board experiences, please, use the “Inquiry Guide for Study in Success” to steer discussions, explore alternatives, promote action and achieve positive results.

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Doing Business on the Gulf Coast

The WorkSource: A Study in Success

Chapter 1 Introduction

DemandDriven

Gulf Coast Workforce | Changing the revolving door service model to address the real problems facing the communities it serves

Four years ago, while the U.S. workforce development system was transitioning to the requirements of the new Workforce Investment Act, one Workforce Board was stirring things up on the Gulf Coast of Texas.

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board, formerly three private industry councils comprising the City of Houston, the balance of Harris County, and the surrounding 12 counties, was established in 1996, prompted by Texas State legislation that consolidated funding streams within the workforce development system. The resulting workforce board designated The WorkSource as the primary service provider to the fourth largest city and tenth

largest metropolitan region within the United States.

In those early years of the workforce board, it became clear that

the workforce system, while providing services to a vast number of residents, was having little

affect on the greater economic welfare of the community. The organization consistently met or exceeded its performance standards, but it was operating as an assembly line—jobseeker comes in seeking assistance, career advisor provides services, jobseeker enters or returns to the workforce. This revolving door service model did little to solve the underlying problem: reducing the number of unemployed within the community and/or increasing the number of viable jobs within the region.

Once the workforce board had realized that the organization was simply serving the supply and had invested little into methods to develop the demand, the board's entire philosophy of

workforce development shifted and the system gave birth to a revolutionary new way of doing business.



Visioning Process

This epiphany resulted in a strategic plan that the workforce board formulated from a visioning process that reshaped not only the entire structure of the organization, but also the rationale behind the operational plan. This dynamic document, found-

founded on the
core values of
innovation,
productivity,
accountability,
and results

ed on the core values of innovation, productivity, accountability, and results, acknowledges the need to serve both the supply side of the equation, the resident, and the demand side, the employer. The vision details the three domains in which the organization aspires to make a difference: improvements to the Gulf Coast region, to the regional workforce system, and to the workforce board itself. The vision statement asserts that a commitment to these changes will result

in more competitive employers, a better-educated workforce, more and better jobs within the region, high incomes for the residents, and an increasing return on investment. While any organization might draft a strategic plan and display it for all to see, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board created a document that forever after has served as a roadmap, receiving regular use. The effort has made all the difference.

Paradigm Shift

This philosophical shift in service structure removed the emphasis from the jobseeker and invested it in a commitment to becoming a business-led, demand-driven system. By focusing on what business needs, the establishment of a fully integrated Employer Services Division has resulted in better understanding of and stronger relationships with local employers. So while the ultimate purpose of serving the workforce remains the same, through practice, the Gulf Coast Workforce Boards has shown that by turning the focus to the demand side of the equation, the quantity, and more importantly, the quality of job placements has increased dramatically.

There is no question that Texas, with its consolidated funding

stream, is fairly distinct from most other states. And no one will deny that the grand scale of Houston, with its five million residents and 100,000 businesses dispersed over a 12,000 square-mile region, makes it stand out in the national workforce development system. While there is no question that these factors provide the Gulf Coast Workforce Board with advantages not available to many other workforce organizations, there is no concept or concern, no program or process presented in the following report that cannot be replicated, in practice or principle, by even the smallest, most remote workforce board in the country.

The Gulf Coast story is varied and complex—grand in size and scope but simple in outcome. By establishing themselves as a demand-driven partner, they are building a better workforce for their community.

Chapter 2

Workforce Board

What We Learned

- The Workforce Board is not the lone agent in the workforce development process. Boards have the opportunity to leverage their existing resources to affect a larger system through collaboration and bigger-picture approaches.
- The composition of Workforce Boards must be such that business has a voice. Key businesses and industries must be represented. Work to assure that private sector Board members are active and engaged when decisions are made, so that the business perspective is considered. Trust their ability to lead the system.
- To truly be business driven, business must lead. Prior to making contact with educators, businesses must be approached to determine the training to be provided; then, training can meet real needs.
- Entering the demand-driven venture half-heartedly, jeopardizes success. To transition to new forms of service delivery successfully, commitment is required from Board members to every last staff.

Willy Sutton, a 1930s bank robber, was asked why he robbed banks. His now famous reply was “Because that’s where the money is.” When you ask the Gulf Coast Workforce Board why it works so hard to understand business, their reply is much the same: “Because that’s where the jobs are.”

Like all Boards, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board has always placed a high priority on finding clients good jobs. By following this trail, it wound up face to face with the region’s business community. It seems obvious now, that working more closely with employers to develop a demand-driven system was simply the most reasonable next step. That was not always the case.

As the Gulf Coast Workforce Board began to explore its new vision, the members realized that they could not remain the solitary operator of a \$170 million workforce development organization, but needed to become the shepherd of a \$6 billion workforce development system --- a system comprised of WIA, other state and federal funded workforce related programs, and education and training, from kindergarten to technical training to graduate and post-graduate programs. As a result, one of the Board’s primary concerns has been and remains how best to leverage its thin slice of the workforce development pie to affect the greater regional system, for the benefit of businesses, residents, and the community as a whole.

A first step to toward achieving the new vision required a redefinition of the Workforce Board itself. Unifying the region’s entire workforce system required leadership of a system, rather than simply the management of workforce programs. As a result of the redefinition, Board members became responsible for accessing business and economic information, grappling with its implications, making judgments and articulating their decisions, guiding the system and, in many cases, owning its projects.

- Identify and support industry champions — individuals in positions of leadership within the business community — who support the workforce system vision and lead the charge, generating interest, involvement and solutions.

Landmines

- A noncommittal approach to demand-driven business services — e.g. keeping one foot in the traditional program model while dabbling with this new system — does not increase the chances of success for either approach, it drastically increases the chance of failure in both.

Windfalls

- The concept of “growing your own” provides necessary skills training to the next generation of workers, and provides a long-term marketing investment, introducing your organization to the workers and businesses of the coming decade.

To achieve the new vision, the Board consciously decided to allow staff to manage programs under the Board-approved strictures of its strategic plan. Separating from day-to-day program administration freed the Board to focus its energies on developing and leading the larger system.

Business is active and engaged, not “involved,” but participating in a leadership role. Considerable effort was made to ensure the composition of the Board was truly representative of the business community. Board recruitment is intended to maintain appropriate levels of business representation, not simply “fill slots.” The Board seeks members who will actively represent the workforce issues of their industry sector. Larger than most at 63 members, the Board has a business majority of well over 51 percent. Board meetings may be cancelled, if the private sector is not in the majority.

To make the “business led” approach a reality, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board reached out to the Greater Houston Partnership, a regional Chamber of Commerce with strong ties to the local business community. The benefit of tapping into existing networks — particularly those within the business community — cannot be stressed enough. Beyond conferring the power of association, Councils of Government, Chambers of Commerce, industry associations, make significant contributions. From these groups come the “champions” — individuals who leverage their position and network to lead the charge on relevant programs and service models to solve business problems. These business and industry leaders often become highly effective advocates for all workforce issues and for the workforce system, by campaigning and becoming a recognizable face for the cause and a focal point for developing solutions. A champion can drive an otherwise effective program to unimaginable levels of success by focusing attention and increasing collaboration. “Champions” bring knowledge of the industry, industry requirements and industry needs that cannot be replicated by even the best informed staff.

As might be expected, education has been the most independent segment of the workforce system. The school system, public and private, at all levels, often views itself as an entity removed from the business world. Such restrictive thinking limits both students’ future career opportunities and regional employers’ economic potential.

For a community to “grow its own” — cultivate a local workforce that is able to sustain and strengthen a local economy — education must adapt to the needs of business. The reality is that the students of today graduate to become the workforce of tomorrow.

The concept of “growing your own” requires the efforts of both education and workforce development to instill in students, as early as elementary school, the practices of occupational exploration, skills development, and fiscal responsibility, expanding upon these lessons throughout junior and senior high school, so students at graduation are able to make informed decisions relative to future careers and higher education.

Some think the demand-driven model of business services could prove to be a fad — the workforce equivalent of bell-bottoms and tie-dye — but, to the Gulf Coast Workforce Board, demand-driven is not a trend. Neither temporary nor half-hearted, the Board has committed to shepherding the workforce development system, extending their role beyond managing programs to building the workforce, the economy and the system. From a functional perspective, business services cannot be separated from the rest of the organization.

Chapter 3 Strategic Plan

What We Learned

- A strategic plan works well when it is reexamined on a regular basis, to ensure that the organization remains focused on its principal aim.
- Don't let a strategic plan be relegated to a frame on the board room wall, a bookshelf, file cabinet or website; make the mission/vision review process part of all programmatic decision making.
- When myriad program performance measures are tracked to determine "progress", the data will be worthless, unless your organization's, your customers', and your region's most important outcomes are given priority.

The transition to a demand-driven workforce system can look like a radical move away from the traditional model, but, in many ways, it is and was a natural evolution for the Gulf Coast Workforce Board. Even so, successful transformation involved a plan.

In 2000, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board came together to create a strategic plan that would serve as a dynamic roadmap in the organization's transition. Early on, the Board made two commitments: (1) the strategic plan would guide every decision it made, and (2) it would return to the strategic plan on a regular basis, to ensure it was reflective of the needs of the community. As a result, every major decision, every program and project is founded on the Board's mission and is examined for its "fit" with the Board's long-range vision.

The Board's commitment to its mission and vision drove it to vigorously explore outcomes — what they expect to achieve within the community on a long-term basis. Their exploration led to discovery and to the development of five results statements, each of which was then defined by measurable criteria that could serve initially as a benchmark, and over time, as the organization's measure of success.

With an orientation to the system, rather than to programs, the Board found itself at the center of the region's workforce issues, identifying problems and opportunities and developing solutions. When the Board talks about systems, it's not just talking about process, it's talking about outcomes: a better-prepared, better-skilled workforce, a growing economy, and a vital community. The expanded focus elevated the level of discussion among Board members, and, most importantly, made more sense to the business community.

In the past, when the Board talked about programs, business wasn't listening. Reporting on a program's "Adult Credential Rate" didn't translate easily to a business's or industry's day-to-day operations.

With a system-wide orientation, the Board is able to focus on broader outcomes, rather than remain tied to maintenance of a set of programs. Through experience, the Board has found that a business-led, demand-driven approach is simply the easiest, most reasonable approach. And it works.



THE GULF COAST WORKFORCE SYSTEM

Bringing People and Jobs Together

Core Values, Mission, and Vision 2003 – 2008

<p>Core Values (Our Strongly Held Beliefs)</p>	<p>Innovation — Productivity — Accountability — Results</p>
<p>Mission (The Reason We Exist)</p>	<p>The Gulf Coast workforce system helps employers solve their workforce problems and residents build careers, so both can compete in the global economy.</p>
<p>Vision (The Future We Aspire To)</p>	<p>For the Gulf Coast region:</p> <p>The Gulf Coast of Texas ranks among the top ten economic regions in the world.</p> <p>Employers have an adequate supply of well-educated and well-trained workers, which enables them to compete in the world economy.</p> <p>Residents have the knowledge, skills, and aptitudes to work and earn incomes that make them self-sufficient.</p> <p>The region is among the most attractive places in the country to live and work.</p>

Core Values, Mission, and Vision 2003 – 2008

Vision (continued)

For the workforce system:

A single, integrated workforce system offers solutions for employers' workforce problems and helps people build careers. Employers access the system and use its services without leaving their place of business.

- Residents are able to learn and work in their homes, in schools, and on the job to realize their greatest potential.
- Residents throughout the region know about the system and can access the same high-quality information and labor market services regardless of where they live or how they come in contact with the system.
- Strong commitments to innovation, productivity, accountability, and results keep the system flexible and responsive to employers' and residents' ever-changing workforce needs.
- Life-long learning and skills development are integral parts of the workforce system. Long-standing relationships between employers and educators keep education and training opportunities one step ahead of the needs of the market.
- The system partners with those industries and businesses that drive the regional economy. It also works with chambers of commerce and economic development entities throughout the region to identify and support emerging industries vital to the region's continued growth and diversification.
- Operating above reproach, the system is highly valued by employers and residents alike.

For the Gulf Coast Workforce Board:

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board sets the regional workforce agenda. It is widely recognized for its excellence as a leader and governing board and for its commitment to making a difference.

Business, labor, and community leaders vie for board membership because they know it is:

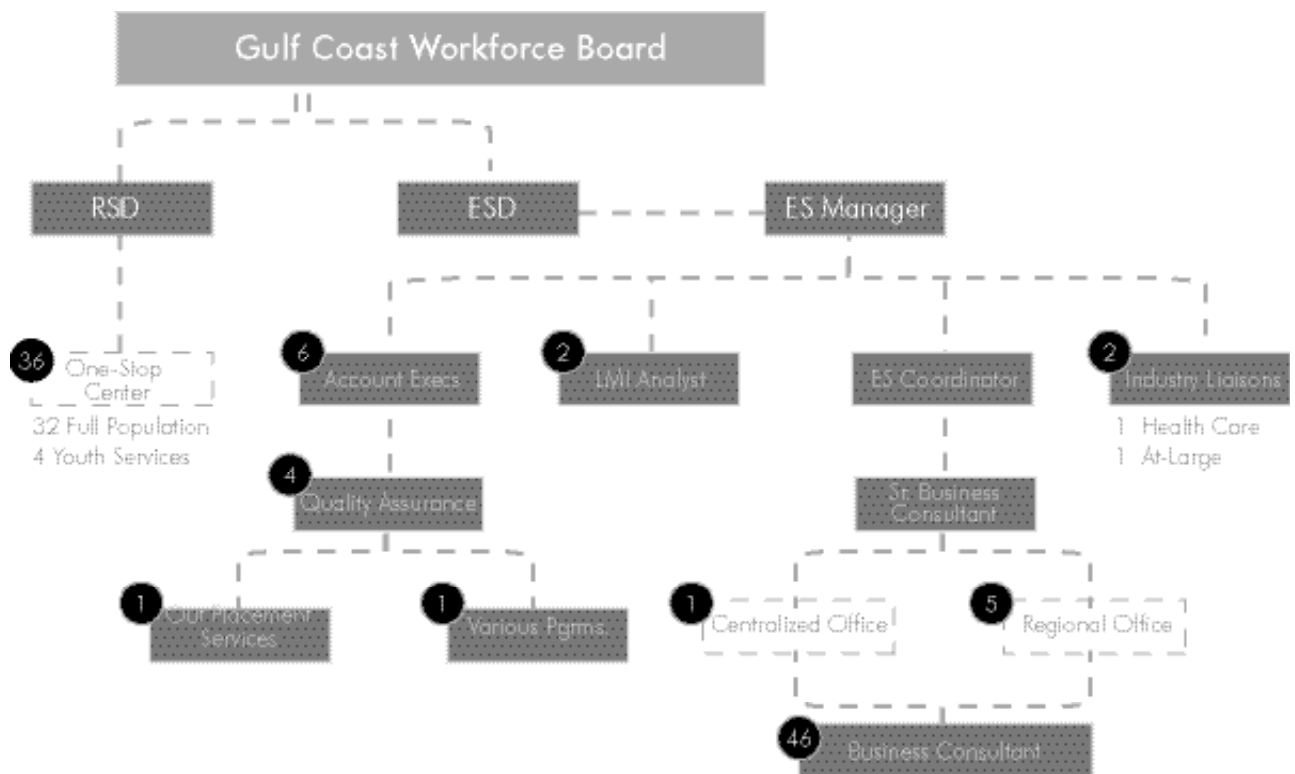
- well-educated, innovative, disciplined, and high-performing
- nationally and locally known for its stewardship of public funds and its commitment to results; it makes funding decisions solely on the basis of performance, not politics
- accountable to its owners (the taxpayers) and their representatives (the elected officials who appointed its members)

Chapter 4 Business Services Model

Gulf Coast wanted to do business with business. Setting out to become demand driven required actively engaging businesses throughout the region. Having a full-time Employer Services staff has been critical to building the lasting relationships needed to succeed. The WorkSource’s Employer Services Division is made up of more than 80 staff members focused on workforce development, one-on-one with employers throughout the region.

Organizational Structure

The WorkSource is designed to provide the highest quality services to all of its customers, whether business or resident. The organizational flowchart illustrates the staffing design of these two divisions.



What We Learned

- Rather than pursuing the traditional line of questioning with customers — “Are you eligible for the services we provide?”— consider an alternative — “What services do you need?” Find out what the customer needs, then find a way to provide it, even if it may be outside the realm of traditional workforce development thinking.
- Strive to be the “go to” location for workforce solutions.
- Consider a different philosophical approach.

The demand-driven concept that the Gulf Coast Workforce Board adopted is really quite simple: whether the economy is good or bad, the job market is determined by business demand. Employer Services is set up to serve the demand side of the equation by strengthening the relationship and the quality of interactions with employers, to generate access to more and better jobs. Services designed to develop businesses contribute to the development of the workforce; services designed to develop the workforce contribute to the development of the business.

To maximize the organization’s limited resources, The WorkSource established a priority system to rank employers according to impact on the region. The criteria to determine prioritization is based on an in-depth review of labor market information, consisting of historical and anticipated job growth, average job openings, and median wages, as well as the importance of the business and industry to the region, the size of the particular company, and the degree of associ-

Information vs. Intelligence

Labor Market Information

Labor market information, or LMI, has been an old, reliable tool for determining trends and forecasting within the regional workforce. The WorkSource, however, has given LMI new meaning by supplementing the quantitative, reprocessed, sometimes stale data of labor market information with the direct, business-focused, current data of labor market intelligence.

Labor Market Intelligence

Similar to the covert definition of intelligence, labor market intelligence focuses on sending staff into the field to ascertain the state of the economy and the viability of the workforce by speaking directly with those on the front lines. Employers, as the demand element within a regional workforce, serve as the primary source of labor market intelligence. Jobseekers and current employees, although approaching the workforce from the opposite perspective, can provide qualitative data relative to job search and quality of life within work settings.

- A long-term constituency in the business community is built by committing and performing.
- Establish a priority system for focusing limited resources to ensure the greatest impact.
- Job placement quality should take precedence over quantity, so take the time to locate qualified candidates for job openings, develop jobs appropriate for residents seeking employment, and continue to learn more about the jobs, businesses and industries in the community.
- Training isn't just something to provide to customers; it's necessary for our own organizations, to make sure staff is up-to-date on what they need to know, in terms of internal

ation with The WorkSource in the past. The ranking consists of three categories of special focus with each business consultant monitoring a caseload of 45–50 “priority one” employers to ensure the highest and most frequent degree of service.

Appropriately, the business services model emphasizes job placement quality over quantity. The program is designed to work with both the business and the jobseeker to understand the skills and experiences necessary for a position and those possessed by an applicant, to make the most appropriate referral. Sending an employer 30 “nearly qualified” applicants for a position not only results in 30 disappointed jobseekers and one frustrated employer, but, more importantly, degrades the relationship with the employer, diminishes trust and adversely affects all future encounters.

In addition to performing active recruitment for employers’ job openings, Employer Services staff provide labor market information, assist with specialty screenings and referrals, provide some computer testing services, perform research and share requested information on state and federal labor laws.

ESD Priority System

Prioritization allows Employer Services to focus on those businesses that will have the most impact on the region’s workforce.

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
Employers in those industries specifically targeted by The WorkSource with 100 or more employees.	Employers in primary service areas with 500 or more employees not targeted by The WorkSource.	Employers with well-established working relationships with existing career office personnel. (The reason for including this category in the list of priority employers is to assure our business customers that existing relationships are highly valued and to demonstrate that good, long-standing relationships will not be disturbed.)

organizational procedures, the economy, business and job opportunities.

- The workforce development system requires constant attention and ongoing maintenance, to function smoothly.

Landmines

- A dynamic tension remains between the staff of Resident Services and Employer Services. Sometimes, the overarching mission is hard to see at the level of the service provider, and the two divisions sometimes seem to be working against one another, as they strive to provide the best immediate service to their particular customer. And, although administrative staff has spent considerable time mapping out how the two divisions work together, there is no great method yet for resolving these conflicting demands.
- Employer Services staff stationed at the One-Stops complain about having to modify their work schedules to perform office “chores,” and Resident Services staff sometimes have trouble locating Employer Services business consultants when needed. The reality is that the nature of these jobs is for Employer Services staff to be out in the field and for Resident Services staff to be available in the office, and there continues to be some strain as the details of

To ensure staff fully understood the new service model prior to taking it out to employers, major training efforts were undertaken internally. Although much time and energy was put into an initial round of training, fine-tuning was required continuously. A team of five staff members, affectionately referred to as the “Power Rangers,” met with each of the 32 One-Stop centers following program implementation, in order to alleviate confusion and address concerns. The follow-up process resulted in 32 pages of additional questions and answers, which were made available to staff.

While the Power Rangers approach may have been established in response to a very specific need, the underlying concept is that training continues far beyond the initial change and is a requirement for moving forward. Resident Services, i.e. staff whose primary contact is with job seekers, continued to learn to improve the quality of their referrals, and Employer Services staff continued to focus on learning and providing improved services to businesses. The organization receives needed feedback on what’s working and what needs fixing.

Although the philosophical shift to business-led, demand-driven services may seem to some people like a 180 degree shift from the traditional resident focus, the goal remains the same: for both residents and businesses to receive services targeted to their needs and designed to produce solutions. There remains considerable emphasis on service to residents. In fact, nearly 95 percent of The WorkSource’s total budget is allocated for resident services and the number of residents served in Fiscal Year 2002/03 was just over 450,000 individuals; an 11 percent increase in residents served is anticipated for Fiscal Year 2003/04.

day-to-day life are worked through.

- Having employees of The WorkSource, the State, and the seven different vendors collocated together “has been a monster” in regard to dealing with process issues and getting everyone and their respective employing organization to work together.
- Establishing a prioritization of businesses was initially quite a challenge — particularly, discerning the boundaries and determining what differentiated a “priority one” business from a “priority two,” etc.
- Combining networks and creating one infrastructure for all the partners, both in terms of computer systems and the reality of physical space, was a considerable challenge.

Windfalls

- The physical environment has become more inviting, to both staff and the community. The One-Stops are comfortable and businesslike, where once they were the stereotypical sterile setting of a social services institution. Staff enjoy their work environment, and customers feel good coming in for job search assistance.
- Reconfiguring the organization to establish the Employer Services Division provided the opportunity to rework the Resident Services Division and streamline its processes as well.
- The focus of the organization expanded from targeting a very specific low-income, welfare population to serving the entire community. Hard-to-serve populations are not ignored, but incorporated into the more inclusive structure of services.
- Establishing a caseload of “priority one” businesses for each business consultant allowed staff to develop greater relationships with area employers. As these relationships grew, so did communication and trust, which resulted in better understanding of job openings and the skills necessary for success. The knowledge is passed on to Resident Services staff who have a greater range of available positions available to job-seekers, make better referrals and provide more useful labor market information.
- Success in various initiatives has resulted in a positive reputation throughout the region, which has allowed for even greater opportunities for collaboration and continued success. Like the old cliché, it takes reputation to make reputation.
- Services to the community have improved through collocation of organizations and services at the neighborhood One-Stop centers.

Chapter 5

Health Care Industry Initiative

What We Learned

- Collaborative efforts succeed because they are Board supported, not Board funded. Great things can be accomplished by working together to leverage existing resources, rather than attempting to recreate what may already exist.
- With complicated issues, consider multiple solutions, rather than attempting to identify a potentially non-existent universal cure.
- The role of industry liaison is essential for maintaining ongoing communication with local businesses; however, it requires focus and commitment. Without the resources to dedicate a full-time staff person, designate an existing staff person to have the role of industry liaison as his or her primary responsibility.

To more effectively use its limited resources, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board chose to establish a series of strategic industry initiatives. As large and far-reaching as it is, the Board knew that it could not do everything. By focusing its energies on industry sectors that are important to the local economy, the Board is, in effect, making regional venture investments, in the context of a strategy intended to get the most “bang for the buck.”

An excellent example of how the demand-driven approach and the Employer Services model came together is with The WorkSource’s foray into its initial industry initiative, the health care industry.

The Board investigated industries that were high demand and high growth and explored occupations described as high skill and high growth. The result was a lengthy list, but when cross-referenced and analyzed, it was easy to ascertain which of the industries and their corresponding occupations were in need of focused attention.

While business services and educational services are ranked higher on the industry list in terms of absolute job growth through 2010, health services, ranked third, has ten occupations targeted on the occupation list. On the list of occupations, registered nurses, is ranked third in regard to absolute change through the end of the decade. In addition, Houston is home to the Texas Medical Center, the largest medical complex in the world with more than 740 acres of healthcare facilities. The decision was made to target the health-care industry.

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board had been a long-standing member of the Greater Houston Partnership (GHP), Houston’s regional Chamber of Commerce, but the two organizations had not worked together on a substantive matter. Healthcare was an issue that desperately needed attention. When combined, these two organizations had the necessary talent and influence to make positive and

Windfalls

- The health care initiative had important side benefits. Relationships among the Board, the Greater Houston Partnership, and the health-care industry were strengthened. Success improved relationships among the various healthcare providers within the industry, increasing the likelihood of greater communication and collaboration in the future.
- By providing effective solutions to the health care industry's workforce problem, the Health Services Steering Committee provided a suc-

cessful outcome. long-lasting improvements. The healthcare staffing crisis was the perfect opportunity for the two organizations to work together and to learn each other's practical value. GHP had the respect and vast network of business and economic organizations, while the Board had the staff and the credentials to carry out and sustain such an initiative.

The result was the Health Services Steering Committee, composed of healthcare institutions from throughout the Houston—Galveston region, and championed by Robert Mosbacher, president of GHP's Board of Directors. The WorkSource hired industry liaison, Karen Love, who had considerable experience within the healthcare industry, to serve as the primary representative to the workforce system.

The relationship with GHP meant visibility at the highest levels and established the Board as a bona fide player in the healthcare arena. The Board took the additional step of hiring Dr. Richard Murray, a highly respected member of the education community, to perform in depth analysis and speak candidly with hospital administrators about

High-Growth, High-Demand Industry Sectors

Identify sectors that show high growth and/or high demand by total employment (greater than regional average in 2000: 5,768), projected growth rate (greater than regional average for all industries for 2000–2010: 18.8%; greater than 7,000 new jobs for 2000–2010), and average wage (greater than \$600 weekly wage in 2000), ranked by absolute change in employment (2000–2010).

Industry Sector	Absolute Change (2000-2010)
Business services	83,210
Education	52,930
Health services	45,490
Engineering & Management	28,980
Special trade contractors	22,130
Communications	3,430

successful model for future initiatives in other industries.

- The success of partnerships has resulted in sharing a wide range of resources, including office space, staff, and equipment, and allowed for greater efficiency — online applications, cross-screening, etc.

their respective issues. Through his consultations and assessments, Dr. Murray established that the nursing shortage was even greater than the public labor market information revealed. The revelation furthered the Board's standing within Houston's expansive healthcare industry.

What had happened, in effect, was that the supply and demand elements of the workforce equation were imbalanced within the healthcare industry, and there were more jobs than qualified candidates. The result was a hiring war that continued to escalate, leading to incredibly high rates of turnover and a total lack of stability within healthcare institutions.

Seeing no end to the churning workforce and despite a historical lack of cooperation between medical institutions, the largest hospitals agreed to join together for the purpose of resolving industry-wide concerns. The smaller hospitals simply did not have the resources to fight an ongoing wage war and joined efforts. The program was driven strictly by employers' needs and focused solely on

High-Skill, High-Demand Occupations

Focus on occupations that show high skill, high demand, as determined by projected employment (greater than average for all occupations in 2010: 3,833), projected growth rate (greater than average for all occupations for 2000–2010: 18.8%), educational requirements (postsecondary degree or certificate, long-term on-the-job training, or work experience in a related occupation), and median hourly wages (greater than median for all occupations in 2000: \$13.64), ranked by absolute change in employment (2000–2010).

Occupation	Absolute Change (2000-2010)
Customer service representatives	13,160
Computer support specialists	9,010
Registered nurses	8,400
Computer software engineers, applications	7,440
Elementary school teachers	7,000
Secondary school teachers	5,860

resolving the issue of the nursing shortage. (The long-term challenge of creating salary equity between teachers and practitioners will need to be resolved, in order to eliminate the drive away from teaching.)

What were the solutions to bridge the gap between health care demand and the supply of nurses? A variety of solutions were put into play: marketing career opportunities to middle school students, training foreign-schooled nursing professionals for licensure within Texas, improving the work environment in hospitals, and advocating for public funding of nursing education at the state level.

But the most significant and immediate contributor to the problem of meeting industry demand was highlighted by one of the Steering Committee's initial findings: the nursing shortage did not result from a lack of individuals interested in entering the nursing career path, but, rather surprisingly, from a lack of nursing faculty at the various nursing schools. The shortage of instructors restricted the number of students enrolled in nursing programs, which in turn limited the number of qualified graduates and the number of new entrants into the field. Because of faculty shortages, supply could not possibly meet demand.

The Health Services Steering Committee served as a catalyst to bridge the training gap. Working together, hospitals willingly sacrificed their most valuable resource in the short-term, to provide a solution for the long-term. Each participating hospital chose to donate their most senior nurses to local nursing schools, in order to increase faculty. The result was to allow a larger number of students to enroll, more students to graduate and, subsequently, more new entrants into the healthcare profession. No "hard" money was used in the solution, as it was facilitated through cooperation and the leveraging of existing resources.

The results: enrollment of initial licensure students is up 27 percent at Gulf Coast-area community college programs, up 13 percent at general academic university programs, and up 33 percent at health science centers from Fall 2000 to Fall 2003. In total, the 13 Gulf Coast nursing education programs have increased enrollment of students seeking initial nursing licensure by 557 students — a 24 percent increase in just three years.

The WorkSource staff and the Greater Houston Partnership continue their work in the health care industry and are exploring other industries that could benefit from a focused, collaborative effort. Under consideration are aerospace, biotech and the life sciences, engineering (both construction and software), as well as the area's ubiquitous oil industry.

Health Services Steering Committee Major Results

Since its inception in 2000, the Health Services Steering Committee and its four workgroups have been active on a number of fronts. Their combined activities have produced the following results.

- Fall 2003 enrollments in Gulf Coast nursing schools in programs leading to initial RN licensure are up 23 percent over Fall 2000, an increase of 533 students in three years.
- Graduations from these programs for the same time period are up 22 percent, an additional 179 students. These statistics mark a dramatic reversal of the trend of declining applications and enrollments to and graduations from area nursing programs that persisted throughout the late 1990s.
- An additional \$52 million in state funding has been appropriated to support dramatic increases in enrollments and to fund innovative approaches for recruiting and training more registered nurses and nurse faculty. A good portion of that money will be allocated to the Gulf Coast region.
- For the third year in a row, participating hospitals are contributing staff qualified to teach in local nursing schools. For the 2003–2004 academic year, their contribution has grown to approximately 28 full-time staff equivalents, a contribution worth a conservatively estimated \$1.6 million.
- Over the past two years, local foundations have provided over \$900,000 to supplement nurse faculty salaries and fund additional teaching positions to help ameliorate the critical faculty shortage which is preventing further enrollment increases in local nursing schools. The Committee has identified and expanded a very successful model for upgrading incumbent healthcare workers to jobs as licensed vocational nurses, registered nurses, and other healthcare professionals in labor-short occupations. This program helps hospitals attract, train, and retain quality employees. Known as the Work School Program, this initiative has 95 percent completion rate. Since March 2001, 250 workers from 20 participating hospitals enrolled in the program. Of those enrolled, 68 percent were preparing for initial licensure as registered nurses. Federal and state agencies have provided approximately \$5.5 million in discretionary funding to support this initiative.
- The Committee has developed an innovative model for improving the work environment in Gulf Coast hospitals. This model has four key elements: (1) envisioning the ideal hospital work environment; (2) defining the current industry norm; (3) assessing the current hospital work environments against this industry norm; and (4) recognizing outstanding performance and sharing best practices. This is a continuous-improvement model designed to make Gulf Coast hospitals the employers of first choice for nurses and other healthcare professionals.

Chapter 6 Marketing: External and Internal

A key piece of any business venture is getting the word out to the public. When the Gulf Coast Workforce Board began to establish its “whole new way” of providing services back in 2000, hiring a marketing professional and developing a marketing plan was one of the first things it did, to help advertise its new services to both residents and employers.

Market research was conducted before, during, and after implementation of the new business services model. Benchmarks were established to determine what the community already knew of their local workforce development agency and to help gauge progress and

Website



What We Learned

- Even without the resources of a dedicated marketing person, things can be done on an organizational level to help with marketing to the community, including eliminating governmental lingo and acronyms and describing services to employers in words they understand.
- Focus on solutions, rather than on the subsidized cost.
- Establish a single brand for the organization, then use it everywhere.
- Market internally. Staff must know who they are before they can become part of the public identity.
- Present yourself, your services and your organization honestly.

Windfalls

- Every staff person has demonstrated a willingness to share common goals and go this new direction.

change attitudes toward the new organization and services. Agency names, logos, even color schemes were tested through focus groups before the organization decided upon “The WorkSource” and the honeycomb logo, which is now fully integrated into every letter, brochure and business card.

While attempts are made to reach out to the entire community, 75 percent of all marketing is currently geared toward the private sector business. Marketing to businesses consists of media efforts (e.g., TV, radio, and movie theaters), and other methods (e.g., buses, elevators, and CD-based presentations). Bookmarks, mugs, pens, coasters, textbook protectors, newsletters, letters, brochures, flyers, and posters are branded as well.

Marketing is taken very seriously, and the Board writes marketing standards into every vendor contract, including increasingly severe penalties for the accumulation of infractions.

The organization’s marketing efforts are also integrated 100 percent into the organization’s operations. Marketing considerations are factored into all operational decisions, and all operational discussions include a consideration of the marketing effects. Integrating the two reduces the chance of programs derailing existing marketing efforts and marketing campaigns misrepresenting The WorkSource and its staff or programs.

One of the primary reasons the Board felt such massive marketing efforts were necessary was business’s impression of government and government-funded “free” programs. Businesses are wary of government and tend to see it as a barrier, rather than a catalyst for progress. There is also a commonly held belief that anything free is bad, that anything with zero cost has zero value. The further the organization could distance itself from any semblance of government bureaucracy, the better it would be. The organization removed government lingo and acronyms from its vocabulary; “Jobseeker” became “resident”; “employer,” “business”; “client,” “customer”; and “Rapid Response,” “outplacement.”

As the organization moved forward, the challenge was to “sell” its services to employers as commercial business ventures and to avoid

discussing the amount or source of funding, focusing instead on the services and their benefits.

Before any of these marketing campaigns took off, however, efforts had to be directed internally. In order to ensure consistency of message to the public from all levels of the organization, The WorkSource staff were the initial targets of marketing efforts during the first year. The internal marketing effort was launched with the distribution to every staff member of a gift box in the shape of the logo — a honeycomb hexagon. The box contained a coffee mug and smaller tokens, all in the color scheme and bearing the newly established name and logo. The rationale for such an elaborate undertaking was that, with such a large, dispersed staff, something extraordinary had to be done to create a sense of cohesion and to mark the beginning of a new reality with a new image.

Chapter 7 Performance and Results

What We Learned

- Step away from managing for traditional performance measures and, instead, focus on providing services to meet identified demand; the outcomes will manage themselves and performance measures will be achieved.
- A system set up to support demand will attract the supply side, and outcomes will be met.
- Performance measures will be required by the funding source, but should not become the motivating factor.
- Meaningful standards reflect the vision, mission and goals outlined in the strategic plan; not simply the funders' performance standards.
- Be mindful of the system for tracking performance measures; it can obscure more important results.

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board's revolutionary philosophy with regard to performance measures is: While traditional performance measures are essential to a program, they should not be primary to the organization. To operate as a demand-driven organization, the primary focus must be on meeting the needs of the customer; when done purposefully and with commitment, results will be achieved, and the performance measures will be achieved.

According to an old saying "You get what you measure." The Gulf Coast Workforce Board is so committed to ensuring that its measures are relevant to its established mission and vision, that it is what it measures. As one of staff put it, "In a very significant way, our measurements have driven us to what we ought to be." For measurements to have such a profound effect, they must be consistent with the organization's vision, mission and strategic goals.

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board's record for meeting its mandated program performance measures is pristine; however, how it appears to those that fund its various programs is simply not a primary concern to the Board. The Board has invested much time and energy to explore the correlation between measures and results, and to assure programs and their related performance measures correspond with the strategic plan. The Board is committed to ensuring that its programs are serving their purpose and achieving positive results within the community.

Of the 42 federal and state mandated measures, 29 are in direct correlation with the Board's five results statements, while the remaining 13 relate to process rather than results. Although none of the government-required measures support the first or fifth results statements ("more competitive employers" and "increasing return on investment"), seven measures fall under "a better-educated workforce," fourteen under "more and better jobs," and three under "higher incomes."

On top of these 42 set outcomes, the Board has created additional performance measures correlated with its five results statements, to ensure that Gulf Coast’s services are comprehensive and to achieve the results prescribed in the strategic plan. The additional measures include gross regional product, revenue per employee, education credentials, net jobs created, new jobs created, employment, per capita income, and earnings.

Example of Results Measure

Results, Measures, Baselines and Targets Framework:
2003 – 2008

Results	For the Regional Workforce System	For the Regional Workforce System
<p>1. More Competitive Employers</p>	<p>Gross Regional Product by 2008</p> <p>The region’s real gross product will rise to \$233 billion, 28% above the 2002 level of \$182 billion. (Target represents a \$51 billion increase.)</p>	<p>Revenue Per Employee by 2008</p> <p>x percent of employers receiving services from the WorkSource will have increases in revenue per employee of at least 10%.</p> <p>note: We will develop the parameters, establish a baseline, and set a target for this measure by 06/04.</p> <p>8% of the region’s employers will use the WorkSource’s services (Target represents 9,100 employers using the WorkSource services, 112% over the 2002 level of 4,300, or an increase of some 4,800 employer customers.)</p> <p>55% of employers using The Worksource’s services will be repeat.</p>

Chapter 8

Characteristics of Success

What We Learned

- Rather than spending all resources on the delivery of services, invest some resources to establish collaborative ties to the others, especially, businesses with a strong need and interest in workforce.
- Think beyond the traditional; consider all options — no matter how seemingly absurd — before determining the best path forward.
- Immediate return is not always the best option. Consider how decisions might affect the long-term future, and factor in the distant benefits before choosing an option.

Landmines

- Innovation is not without challenges, and a venture into new territory often brings profound risks. Share the knowledge and the risk as widely as possible. Make sure the preparations, infrastructure and partners support the initiative.

Much of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's success can be attributed to qualities that have developed within the Board and the administrative staff of The WorkSource: leadership, innovation, commitment, and vision. These qualities have established The WorkSource as one of the nation's preeminent workforce service delivery organizations.

Leadership allowed the Gulf Coast Workforce Board to become a pivotal player within the Houston Metropolitan Region by reaching out to like-minded organizations, such as the Greater Houston Partnership. A successful workforce organization is not focused on operating programs, on funding Band Aid® solutions for jobseekers with re-employment challenges or on referring workers to businesses with urgent staffing needs. A successful workforce system invests in building through collaboration with others, to create successful businesses, better jobs and a stronger community.

Innovation fostered creating, testing and proving new techniques, rather than waiting for proven techniques to be brought to its attention. The Board's willingness to encourage creative thinking leads to new ways of seeing its customers and seeing the possibilities for service. By stepping back to examine the bigger picture, developing new partnerships and implementing new services, Gulf Coast has been able to move into new markets with new solutions.

Commitment led to believing so strongly in the new model that halfway measures were not an option. The Gulf Coast Workforce Board did not experiment with the demand-driven model; they marched forward with it. The Board was prepared for disappointments; the Board knew they were inevitable and unavoidable. Commitment drove them forward through the setbacks. Rapidly, the new model became "The way we do business."

Vision allowed the Board and staff to see beyond the short-term horizon and to envision how a proposal could potentially affect the

Windfalls

- Many staff of The WorkSource and its affiliated programs contend that it is much more interesting, enjoyable and fun to place to work as a result of the transition to a demand driven system.

organization and the region's economy in the future. A perspective on the future encouraged the Board to look favorably on an initiative that was short on immediate payoffs, but promised significant long-term benefits. As a result, immediate payback took a back seat to a longer-term investment and a better return on investment.

When these four qualities come together, Gulf Coast can deliver more innovative and viable workforce solutions — not simply for today's jobseeker, but for businesses and the entire community. Today, tomorrow, and, hopefully, far into the future, The WorkSource will continue to be a study in success.

About the Authors

This report was developed by **Rgamble and Associates**. Larry Pitchford was the principle author, Jennipher Pham was the Designer and Graphic Artist and Rob Gamble was the Project Manager and Editor. Bill Janes of DOL provided substantial editorial assistance and Nick Lalpui of DOL supervised printing and logistical support.

Inquiry Guide for

A Study in Success

I. The Gulf Coast Board adopted a demand driven philosophy; developed a strategic plan to achieve its mission, vision and desired results; dropped the old “managing programs” and adopted a new “leading the system” approach.

To make the new way real, the Board took ten actions :

1. Implemented an Employer Services Division
2. Revised the service delivery model for Resident Services
3. Prioritized businesses
4. Referred the most qualified applicants to openings
5. Implemented a Health Care initiative
6. Responded to demand with a “pipeline approach” to supply
7. Changed to a new name and image for the organization
8. Marketed the new organization to businesses
9. Marketed the operational changes to staff internally
10. Implemented measures correlated to desired results

A. How do the ten actions (individually and together) reflect a demand driven philosophy for finding solutions to workforce problems?

B. How do the ten actions (individually and together) address a demand driven system’s mission, vision and desired results?

C. How do the ten actions (individually and together) produce “system” approaches to developing and implementing workforce solutions?

II. The Gulf Coast Board sees itself not as managing a collection of programs, but as leading a system. The Board's mission, vision and results statements and its "system" approach were the basis for its strategic plan.

A. The Board says a mission statement expresses "the reason we exist;" the Board's mission statement includes employers.

1. A workforce Board extends its mission to "help[ing] employers solve workforce problems" for the following reasons:

2. Our Board can do more to contribute to "help[ing] employers solve workforce problems" by:

B. The Board vision statement includes the region, the workforce system and the board itself and addresses them separately.

1. A workforce Board includes the region, the workforce system and the Board itself in its vision for the following reasons:

2. Our Board can contribute more to the economic vitality of the region, the workforce system and the Board by:

C. The Board results statements include competition, education, better jobs, higher incomes and an increasing return on investment.

1. A workforce Board wants improvements in competition, education, better jobs, higher incomes and an increasing return on investment for the following reasons:

2. Our Board can contribute more to improvements in competition, education, better jobs, higher incomes and increasing return on investment by:

D. We can strengthen our strategic plan and perform better in the areas of leadership; systems approach to solutions; employer services; achieving goals for the region, the workforce system and the Board; improving competition, education, better jobs, higher incomes and increasing return on investment by the following actions:

III. Gulf Coast Board created an Employer Services Division to work one-on-one with businesses.

A. The factors appropriate for prioritizing businesses in our area are:

B. A “quality over quantity” placement policy will contribute to our success with both businesses and job seekers by:

C. When we implement and improve our employer (business) services, we anticipate the following changes will need to be made in our resident (job seeker) services model:

D. We intend to take the following actions to reduce staff confusion and concern resulting from implementation and improvement of our employer (business) services:

IV. The Gulf Coast Board brought together the demand-driven approach and the employer services model to form the health care industry initiative.

A. High-growth, high-demand industry sectors in our area are:

B. High-skill, high-demand occupations in our area are:

C. Opportunities for partnering with high-growth, high-demand industries providing high-skill, high-demand occupations include the following industries:

D. Forming an industry steering committee, hiring an industry liaison and developing more useful workforce-related information is within our capabilities for the following industries:

E. A “pipeline” approach to meeting demand for the occupations in C and for the industries in B and D will require collaboration with the following groups and organizations:

F. Based on A-E above, the most productive initiative(s) for our area will most likely be with the following industry(ies):

V. To change its image, the Gulf Coast Board complemented “getting the word out” with marketing efforts “directed inward.”

A. Businesses’ view our workforce organization(s) in the following way:

B. Job seeker’s view our workforce organization(s) in the following way:

C. To change our image with the business community, we will change the following operational procedures:

D. To change our image with the job seeker community, we will change the following operational procedures:

E. The following marketing standards will be included in our vendor (workforce service provider) contracts:

F. All staff will more thoroughly understand and consistently disseminate the Board’s message, because our internal marketing and listening practices will include:

VI. The Gulf Coast Board’s primary focus is meeting the needs of its customers; by so doing, the Board believes, results will naturally flow. The Gulf Coast Board meets or exceeds its funder-required performance measures.

A. In the result area of more “competitive employers,” measures include:

B. In the result area of a “better educated workforce,” measures will include:

C. In the result area of “more and better jobs,” measures will include:

D. In the result area of “higher incomes,” measures will include:

E. In the result area of increasing “return on investment,” measures will include:

E. Correlating our funders’ measures with the five results statement produces the following grid:

Desired Result _____

Funder Measure _____

Competitive Employers

Educated Workforce

More & Better Jobs

Higher Incomes

Increasing Return on Investment

National Business Learning Partnership

Participating Organizations

Career Opportunities Cape Cod, MA
Pikes Peak Workforce Center, CO
Chicago Workforce Center @ Pilsen, IL
San Diego Workforce Partnership, CA
Delaware WIB
East Central Georgia Consortium
Tulare County WIB, CA
Eastern Arkansas WIB
Hampden County WIB, MA
Idaho Career Centers
Maine Career Center
Lower Rio Grande Valley WDA, TX
Frederick County JTA, MD
Merrimack Valley WIB, MA
Mayor's Office Employment Development, MD
Nevada JobConnect
NW Tennessee WIB
NW Georgia Workforce Area
Oakland WIB, CA
Pasco Hernando Jobs & Education, FL
Pacific Mountain Consortium Workforce Development Council , WA
Southern Essex WIB, MA
North Valley Job Training Consortium, CA
Southern Maryland Works
Gulf Coast WIB, TX
SW Washington Workforce Council
Tampa Bay Workforce Alliance, FL
Workforce Essentials, TN
The Employment Source, OH
Topeka Workforce Center, KS
Northwest Concentrated Employment Program, WI
Dept. of Employment Services, Washington, DC
Utah Department of Workforce Service
West Central Arkansas Workforce Centers
West Piedmont WIB, VA
North Central WIB, PA
West Virginia Region 7 WIB
NW Nebraska Workforce Development
Workforce Alliance, KS
Pee Dee Regional Council, SC
Workforce Investment Council of Clackamas County, OR
Boston Private Industry Council
WorkSource of the South Plains, TX
Capital Area Michigan Works



The WorkSource[®]