

ARKANSAS WORKFORCE SYSTEM EVALUATION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - EASTERN REGION

Sites Visited - West Memphis and Forrest City

The purpose of the Executive Summary is to provide a concise overview of the Eastern Region site report. This summary is intended to be shared with regional leaders so they may respond to the recommendations with action strategies for process improvements.

Strengths



Highlights of Collaboration

Analysis: Although staff still tend to think along programmatic lines, they know enough about partner agencies to make appropriate referrals. Collaboration efforts are especially evident as staff use “walking referrals”, personally walking customers to other partner services in the AWCs .

- ✓ The open layout of the resource room in Forrest City encourages collaboration. This layout supports their philosophy that all Center customers are everyone’s customer.
- ✓ In West Memphis, staff capitalize on being located on the Community College campus and take full advantage of the services available, from basic literacy to Career Pathways.
- ✓ Collaboration is occurring with partner agencies promoting the CRC. Partners refer customers to the AWCs to take the CRC because they recognize the benefits for their customers.



Highlights of Customer Service

Analysis: While there is no active process for measuring customer satisfaction in this region, there is a general feeling among staff that customers are satisfied with the services they receive and benefit from the co-located partner services.

- ✓ An expectation for quality customer service exists that crosses programmatic/employer lines.
- ✓ Putting customers first and working together to meet customer needs is a common theme.
- ✓ Board members and their families have taken advantage of the AWC services and have given very positive feedback which demonstrates and supports the theme of quality customer service.



Highlights of Performance Measurement

Analysis: The WIA standards are being met in this region because that’s the focus of both leadership and staff. However, this impacts service delivery by limiting the number of enrollments which warrants further discussion. Locating AWCs on College Campuses appears to impact the number of AWC customers who take advantage of these services.

- ✓ The Director of the WIBEA reported that the LWIB is “ecstatic” with how well they’ve done in this region in meeting WIA performance standards.
- ✓ A key element to meeting WIA performance is the Performance Specialist who proactively works with case management staff to ensure cases are being managed to meet programmatic goals.
- ✓ The Career Pathways program is working well in West Memphis. They are exceeding their goals, including the number of TEA enrollments. Co-location was cited as a primary reason.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Challenges

- The co-management structure may unintentionally lend itself to an “us and them” mentality among staff, based upon programmatic lines. DWS staff stated that the DWS office manager was in charge of the Center while WIA and Partner Agency staff stated that the One Stop Operator was in charge of the Center. In more than one interview it was stated that even with a group effort (co-management) someone needs to be in charge.
- There appeared to be a struggle with the decision making roles of DWS state staff, College Administrators, LWIB staff, and the One Stop Operator. The challenge is to ensure that all entities are at the table with an equal voice when decisions are made that affect the operations of the Center.

Recommended actions:

- Clarify what is meant by Co-Management of the Centers. Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the management team. Create a consolidated organizational chart that illustrates this organizational structure of the Center and communicate this to staff.
- Identify and clarify the roles of DWS state staff, Community College administrators, the LWIB, and the One Stop Operator in the decision making processes that affect daily operations of the Center.

SERVICE INTEGRATION AND COLLABORATION

Challenges

- Strategic, formal cross training among all Center staff is not happening here. For staff that take the initiative, and are willing to go the extra mile, it does. However, this makes cross training efforts ad hoc and potentially inconsistent. Center staff all have access to AJL, but haven't taken full advantage of having this access to coordinate and streamline Center services.
- True financial integration has been difficult. This region attempted to create a Business Services Team that were Center employees (rather than programmatically focused), with salaries paid through allocations from each partner. This discussion became convoluted quickly regarding salaries, benefits, and seniority. There was frustration expressed that they can do cost allocation for the buildings, but not for the staff.

Recommended actions:

- Create a training plan and process to implement the original goal of cross training all staff in Resource Room functions (i.e. resume writing, entering job orders) as this will provide more staffing options to meet customer needs and could help streamline Center processes.
- Re-start the conversation regarding cost allocation for staff in the Centers. The example of creating a Business Services team by sharing financial resources across programs could be a promising practice to better meet employer needs and increase the exposure of the AWC and its services.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Challenges

- There is not an active process for collecting and analyzing customer satisfaction. There is no systematic approach to evaluate if customers are satisfied with the services being provided.

Recommended actions:

- Since there is anecdotal feedback on good customer satisfaction, formalize it in a way that routinely collects, compiles, and shares the information. Develop a consistent approach to routinely collect this data at all Centers in the region. There are many tools available to accomplish this task. One example is an electronic comment card system from Long Range Systems that collects the information from either the job seeking customer or employer in a consistent, anonymous manner. Reports are generated to the local office on a daily basis and can be compiled nearly real time.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Challenges

- Quality assurance practices consist of file monitoring for compliance. This focus on compliance limits the ability for continuous quality improvement in practice.
- There is a perception that state DWS staff are not open to innovative process improvements on the local level. The example cited was an attempt to implement a swipe card process for customers to track customer flow based on usage and services received. The system could be used to track and report on all of the services, ITAs, costs, and outcomes associated with helping customers receive training and get jobs. This system would also provide the LWIB with a clear picture of the customers, services provided and outcomes in the LWIA. Due to state concerns that this was a duplicative process, they were not able to move forward with this initiative. Real or imagined, this perception may limit the generation of new, innovative ideas on the local level.

Recommended actions:

- While it is important that case records are in compliance with policies and procedures, it is equally important to spend time on continuous quality improvements in practice. Work collaboratively with both state and local staff to develop a continuous quality improvement team that focuses on process and practice improvements that will improve customer outcomes and help them achieve their goals.
- Generating new and innovative ideas at the local level is a critical piece of continuous quality improvement. Dialogue between state DWS staff and local staff needs to occur on an ongoing basis to ensure all involved understand the pros and cons of new ideas, and the rationale behind the decision to move forward with implementation or not.

AWC BRAND**Challenges**

- There are still certain elements of promoting the brand (i.e., name tags and business cards) that are lacking.
- There are staff perceptions that UI customers are handled as a separate business. It doesn't seem as if they are getting evaluated for career interests, career planning and educational opportunities. They come in, file their claim, have their interview and leave.
- Some information on the Eastern website is inaccurate. There are currently no partner services listed, nor is there any information available on the site for employers.

Recommended Actions:

- Ensure that the AWC brand is used on all internal and external communications. Ensure that all elements (including business cards and name tags) of promoting the brand are in place.
- Include all staff in discussions on how to better maximize all AWC services for UI customers. This will involve additional collaboration among and between staff due to the high volume of UI customers.
- Update the Eastern website to correct any inaccurate information. Add partner agency information and information for employers.

BUSINESS SERVICES/SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS**Challenges**

- There is a perception among staff that marketing to employers has to be done by staff separately for their specific program services because of the differences in program policies.
- Without a decided, strategic approach to business services, employment opportunities may be missed. There may also be a duplication of effort in job development activities since many staff are involved and no one is coordinating their activities. There is also the potential to be over contacting employers because of the lack of coordination.

Recommended actions:

- Create materials for staff that are contacting employers that market the AWC and its services as a whole, rather than marketing programmatic services.
- Identify a coordinator for Business Services outreach. Identify and clarify roles and responsibilities of each person doing outreach. Use AJL to track employer contacts to ensure there is no over contacting of employers.

Arkansas Workforce System Evaluation

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