



ARKANSAS WORKFORCE SYSTEM EVALUATION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - WEST CENTRAL REGION

Sites visited: Hot Springs, Morilton and Perryville

The purpose of the Executive Summary is to provide a concise overview of the West Central 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 Organizational Structure

Analysis: This region is one of the few visited for this project where there is a true One-Stop Operator acting as a systems functional leader for the region. The following are specific examples of valuable practices in Organizational Structure:

- ✓ Clearly defined management structure and roles.
- ✓ Workforce Center Operations document is in place with distinct direction for new and existing staff.
- ✓ Top management support integration and collaboration among partners.



Highlights of Business Services

Analysis: The Hot Springs AWC (Arkansas Workforce Center) has a dedicated Business Services Manager funded by WIA who actively facilitates and leads other inter-agency members of the Business Services Teams. The following points illustrate positive approaches in the Business Services area:

- ✓ Strong Business Services Team with commitment, passion and energy to provide service.
- ✓ WIA (Workforce Investment Act) and Veteran's staff work well together marketing the Center services as a single business.
- ✓ Business Services staff enter employer contacts, employer marketing and job leads in AJL and share employer information in partner meetings.



Highlights of Collaboration

Analysis: A culture of collaboration exists in Hot Springs and this region which makes real service integration possible and effective. The items listed below demonstrate effective collaboration efforts:

- ✓ The primary focus is to work together to serve the customer in the best way possible.
- ✓ Strong consistent theme of integration, partnership and collaboration in Hot Springs.
- ✓ Partners understand each other's roles and assist during peak demand.
- ✓ "Getting to know you" events held monthly to quickly learn about community resources.
- ✓ Staff are committed to providing valuable services that respond to each customer's needs.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**Challenges**

- It will continue to be a challenge to balance the WIA One Stop Operator's leadership role over the Workforce Centers with the DWS (Department of Workforce Solutions) local and regional organizational structure. This region does it as well or better than any region visited. Jan Campbell's collaborative leadership skills are a key reason. When Jan Campbell retires in the fall of 2011, even though there is a strong structure in place, there may be leadership transition challenges.

Recommended actions:

- The Executive Director and Center Managers need to continue to form a united front. To continue the effective leadership model and structure the partners have established, leaders need to proactively plan how to perpetuate this model given the upcoming leadership transitions.
- Every Comprehensive Center has an internal policy and procedure manual. To get full value of this, they should be reviewed annually, since staff interviewed did not seem to be fully aware of them.

SERVICE INTEGRATION AND COLLABORATION**Challenges**

- Continuing to deliver this consistent message of teamwork, collaboration, and integration of services as leadership changes, the Centers grow and/or change, and new staff and/or agencies join the AWC partnership will be a challenge.
- Another challenge will be finding time for monthly partner meetings. All staff members that were interviewed reported the value in these meetings, but they are currently not held as often as they used to be. This is a key element in staying on top of changing services; addressing staffing issues; learning about new and changing programs; and continuing to discuss additional ways to collaborate, partner, and integrate services.
- It is difficult to communicate and collaborate with partners when caseloads are high and services are in high demand. UI (Unemployment Insurance) staff in particular may have difficulty finding time to collaborate with partners and participate in cross training efforts.

Recommended actions:

- Make a strong commitment to having partner meetings every month. Management can rotate the responsibilities of creating the agenda, facilitating the meetings, and taking minutes. Ask for staff input when building agendas, and bring in external partner agencies as well. External partners that are already engaged with the Center by participating in the monthly Community Coffee events could be a good place to start.
- Continue to share resources across programs within the Workforce Centers. One example cited was the Job Clubs for TEA (Transitional Employment Assistance) customers at the Hot Springs Center that are open to partner agency's customers.
- Take advantage of the IT position currently in place to create a resource website/online directory of partner services (by county). This will further aid in collaboration efforts across partner

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**Challenges**

- Staff members are dedicated to quality customer service and feel there is a high level of customer satisfaction, but there is no formal way to collect and measure this. Results from the current customer satisfaction survey cards represent a small sample of customers in the Workforce Center, are not compiled in a comprehensive fashion, nor is the information collected shared with staff.
- There is currently no systematic process in place to assess how satisfied the employer community is with the services provided by the Centers in this LWIA (Local Workforce Investment Board).
- It will be a challenge to continue to meet customer expectations and needs without more customer feedback and objective information.

Recommended actions:

- Create a customer satisfaction survey process where customers can rate services on a scale. Appropriate staff can then collect and analyze the ratings, share results with staff, and create improvement processes based on ratings.
- Share results with all AWC staff in a consistent manner. Create a committee with partner representation to focus on customer satisfaction improvements based on the data collected. Create an action plan for implementation that includes both staff and management.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**Challenges**

- One challenge is paying enough attention to meeting programmatic goals that could potentially have fiscal impacts while continuing to focus on meeting the needs of each customer.
- There is an inconsistent focus between partner programs on performance goals. There is a lack of awareness of each other's goals. The challenge is to increase awareness of partner goals and to search for opportunities to improve outcomes collaboratively.
- Without commonly understood Center wide goals and measures related to customer satisfaction (for staff, program customers, and employers), it is difficult to know whether progress is being made in this area.

Recommended actions:

- Share program performance goals and related progress so partners understand each others' goals and can more strategically focus their collaborative efforts to help achieve them. A performance goals sheet (across programs) would be helpful in this effort.
- Develop a scorecard/report card that captures the performance goals of all center programs and additional system performance goals for the local area.
- Produce quarterly and/or annual reports on Center wide performance results. Share and discuss results with staff at partner meetings. Use results to celebrate successes and make improvements where needed.

BUSINESS SERVICES/SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS**Challenges**

- The greatest challenge is to continue to fund the dedicated, full time Business Services Representative (BSR) position in a time of limited resources. The effectiveness of this position is diminished when the responsibilities are spread out among staff members who have multiple roles/ other job responsibilities.

Recommended actions:

- Continue funding for the dedicated Business Services Representative position that leads the Business Services team and efforts.
- Have the AWC create a sector strategy in health care to coordinate resources and meet existing challenges. A retail/hospitality sector strategy that addresses seasonal needs through a coalition also deserves consideration.

AWC BRAND**Challenges**

- Given the long history of the concept of the "Unemployment Office" and the fact that the vast majority of the customers who walk through the doors are UI customers, it is difficult to change that image.
- Continuing to market the single business concept in all details of operations, including business cards.

Recommended Actions:

- In an effort to market the AWC brand, make a concerted effort to get employers and community agencies into the Centers so they can see the AWC brand functioning first hand. Continue to use the most active Board Members to help deliver the AWC brand message.
- To represent the Center as one business, standardize business cards so all staff working out of the Centers have cards with the AWC brand prominently displayed.
- Ensure that all UI customers are informed of and are accessing all available Center programs and services so they too can experience the true brand of the AWC.
- Explore website options that are more consistent with the AWC brand identity. There are existing models nationally that provide interactive access to local workforce center services under a brand identity. One example is the Brevard Workforce website (<http://www.brevardjoblink.org/>).

Arkansas Workforce System Evaluation

(262) 544-4971

Project Manager: James Nitz, Executive Vice-President

jnitz@kaisergroup.com