Arkansas Workforce Systems Evaluation Workforce Systems Report

Introduction

In February 2011, Kaiser Group, Inc. was hired by the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board and the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services to conduct an evaluation of the Workforce Investment System in Arkansas. The contract period was February 1, 2011 to June 30, 2011. The evaluation was designed to be a process review, not a data or compliance review. The focus of the evaluation is to highlight process improvement opportunities, review a sample of the Arkansas Workforce Centers (AWCs) against the State's Certification Criteria, and to create a framework for action for Regional and State Leaders.

There were to be three primary components to the project.

Regional Site Visits and Regional Site Reports in the Eastern, Little Rock, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and West Central regions. Each Regional Site Report contains the following:

I. Introduction
II. Overview
III. Functional Areas (Strengths, Challenges, Recommendations)
   a. Organizational Structure
   b. Service Integration and Collaboration
   c. Customer Satisfaction
   d. Performance Management
   e. Arkansas Workforce Center (AWC) Brand
   f. Business Services/Services to Employers
   g. Customer Flow, Facilities and Resource Rooms

An Executive Summary, with recommended actions, has been created for each Regional Site Report as a separate document in a newsletter format.

The Site reports are point in time profiles of active, evolving workforce systems and were meant to stimulate discussion at the regional and State levels. Is also affords an

opportunity for local, time limited workgroups to offer solutions to the recommended actions.

Workforce Systems Report: The Systems Report contains themes and patterns taken from the Regional Site Reports, and is again, a process review, not a data or compliance review. The Systems Report will follow the same format as the Regional Site Reports.

Workforce Center Certification Process Review: Individual site certification reviews have been combined into a Center Certification Process Review Report. The report will follow the same format as the Certification Criteria. The last section of the Report will focus on Recommendations for a Future Certification Process for Arkansas Workforce Centers.

The Kaiser team would like to thank all the leaders and staff that participated in the project.

Methodology

During the contract period of February 1, 2011 to June 30, 2011, the Kaiser Group evaluation team visited seven workforce regions in Arkansas and eighteen Workforce Centers (this was a mixture of comprehensive, satellite and affiliate centers). The following were the regions visited during the evaluation.

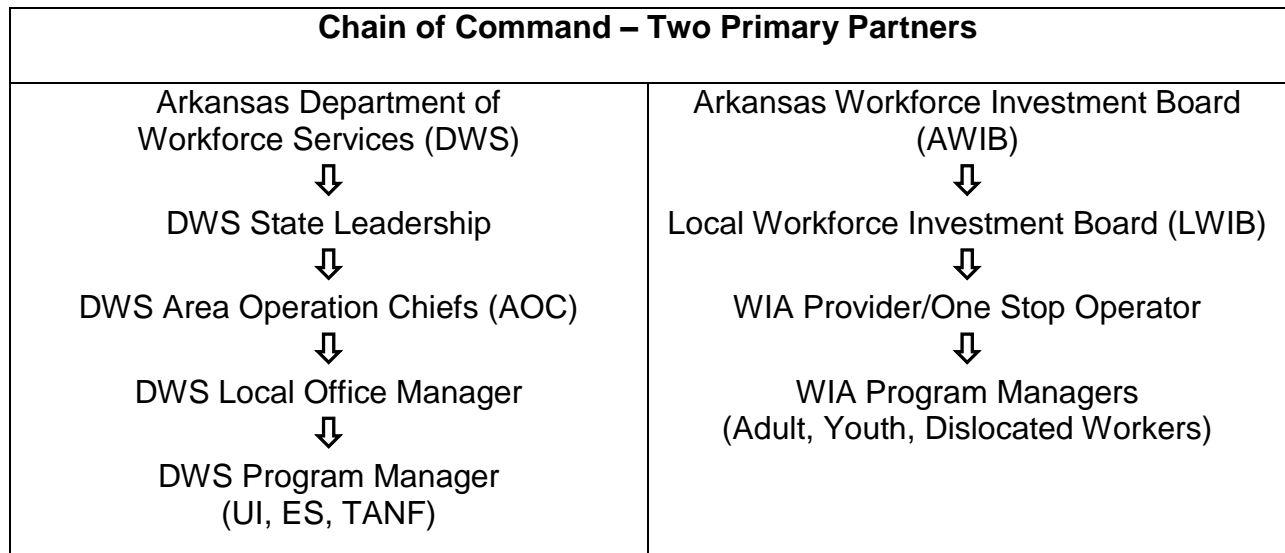| 18 Sites Visited		
Comprehensive = 8	Satellite = 7	Affiliate = 3
Eastern Region • West Memphis – Comprehensive • Forrest City – Comprehensive	**Little Rock** • Little Rock – Comprehensive	
Northeast Region • Jonesboro – Comprehensive • Paragould – Satellite	**Northwest Region** • Harrison – Comprehensive • Fayetteville – Satellite	
Southeast Region • Dumas - Comprehensive • Pine Bluff (Tennessee Street) – Satellite • Pine Bluff (28th Street) - Satellite • Pine Bluff (UAPB) – Affiliate	**Southwest Region** • Camden – Comprehensive • Magnolia – Satellite • Texarkana – Satellite • Lewisville – Affiliate	
West Central Region • Hot Springs – Comprehensive • Morillton – Satellite • Perryville – Affiliate		

At each site interviews were arranged with all levels of staff from key partner agencies. (See Appendix A) Structured interview questions were used to explore progress in the regional Arkansas Workforce Centers toward service integration and collaboration between partners.

Our focus was not a compliance review of each region, but a systems review of the value, quality improvement aspects and functional application of the criteria in the certification standards. The evaluation included a review of the Business Plan and an operational review with seven areas of focus. The seven areas were Organizational Structure, Service Integration and Collaboration, Customer Satisfaction, Performance Management, AWC Brand, Business Services/Services to Employers, and a checklist review of Facilities and Resource Rooms.

Organizational Structure

✦ Findings

In the seven regions visited during the field work portion of this evaluation, the Kaiser Team found seven different variations on the organizational structure that provided leadership to each region's Arkansas Workforce Center System. The variety of organizational charts collected shows these variations and the complexity of managing a multi-partner collaboration given the challenge/vision of operating as a unified system, i.e. the Arkansas Workforce Center.

Chain of Command – Two Primary Partners	
Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (DWS) ⇩ DWS State Leadership ⇩ DWS Area Operation Chiefs (AOC) ⇩ DWS Local Office Manager ⇩ DWS Program Manager (UI, ES, TANF)	Arkansas Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) ⇩ Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB) ⇩ WIA Provider/One Stop Operator ⇩ WIA Program Managers (Adult, Youth, Dislocated Workers)

As the table above illustrates, the chain of command for AWC employees differs by employing agency. Following the chain of command for the employee of the One-Stop Operator that manages a center will end with the Executive Director of the LWIB who holds the contract for the One-Stop Operator. Follow the chain of command for the DWS employee that manages a Center, and it moves through the Area Operations Chief to the Deputy Director of DWS. As can clearly be seen, these paths are not the same, and for them to be the same requires the DWS employee who is in a Center management position to make the conscious choice to report first to the One-Stop Operator in the region where he or she works. When these employees do this, and depending on the degree to which they 'buy in' to this local leadership structure, we find examples of collaborative management.

Leadership collaboration of this type takes a strong vision, a consistent message of alignment on a unified purpose and a structure that implements the vision. The success of fully integrated AWCs requires partnership on many levels, none more important than

DWS and WIA Local Boards and Operators. Merging systems into an integrated model takes personal and organizational commitment and true collaboration often needs mutual benefit to flourish.

Regional AWC leadership models were all somewhat different, but three major themes emerged.

- One-Stop Operator as AWC Systems Leader with a clear chain of command and a cooperative management team (West Central).
- Co-Managed AWC system with defined roles (to varying levels of clarity) and a partnership management team (lead by DWS/WIA-LWIB) (Northeast, Little Rock, Southwest).
- Co-Managed in design, but less so in daily operation. Leadership roles are less defined and not understood clearly throughout partner organizations. (Eastern and Northwest).
- Southeast is in a category by itself, with separate site based leadership that is program focused, and has less AWC regional leadership.

This is not meant to be a judgment on quality of leaders or leadership, but only as a description of the variety of the organizational structures throughout the seven regions.

The Kaiser Evaluation team found a solid and dedicated leadership infrastructure in each of the regions we visited, both in DWS and WIA. Several regions had developed a culture of collaboration that started with top leadership and reached to the customers in visible, tangible ways. However, others operated more as program silos and there was a visible, tangible us and them culture from the top down. There is a continuum in the regions from partial co-location to fully integrated AWCs. At this point in time the evaluation team was not able to compare performance outcomes to level of service integration.

Our team heard repeatedly during the site visits that the vision of DWS and Director Artee Williams was quality customer service, partner collaboration and service integration delivered through the AWC regional system. The quality customer service and partner collaboration components of the AWC model as articulated in the 2009 AWC Certification Criteria are embraced by both major partners. The service integration component and operating as a "single business" in a seamless way to customers has progressed with greater challenges.

The trend of having to serve more customers with fewer resources is very clear (See Appendix B Funding Chart). In each of the regions reviewed, leaders and staff expressed a similar theme that maintaining the comprehensive integrated service model and multiple service points will be a challenge.

According to staff interviewed, the AWC model of collaboration and service integration has been better for customers than stand alone programs. Cost benefit and system savings have not been formally documented, but there are many examples of efficiencies, service collaboration and creative use of resources that offer face validity of system benefits (i.e., Resource Rooms, onsite referrals, employer events, cross training, large company hires).

Challenges

Federal legislation that funds most of the workforce system in Arkansas (DWS FY2011 budget is approximately $967.3 million with less that .5% coming from general revenue) encourages service integration on one hand (especially WIA) but often policies and procedures work against implementing true integration.

Clarifying the leadership models that are needed for regional AWCs to improve and advance the effectiveness of Workforce Services should be a priority. Commitment to the AWC Brand and State Certification requirements calls for a state strategy to address the inconsistencies in regional organizational structure that exists.

Sustaining effective leadership collaboration that exists today will be a challenge as resources dwindle in the near future. The positive leadership models in place need state support, financial incentives and regional acknowledgement beyond the momentum they experience from local collaborative successes.

Validating the DWS/WIA partnership is a challenge. WIA legislation outlines a clear and specific role for LWIBs and One Stop Operators, but with most of the staff and funding consolidated at DWS, in Arkansas the balance needed for an effective partnership can be lost.

Promising Practices

The West Central Region's organizational structure has a true regional One-Stop Operator who exercises functional leadership while facilitating the leadership team in a collaborative style.

The DWS/WIA quarterly management meetings in Little Rock are essential to meeting identified leadership challenges. It can be a forum for strengthening WIA/DWS partnerships if the strategic vision for AWCs is a priority agenda item.

Recommendations

- In conjunction with updating the AWC Certification Criteria, DWS and AWIB need to more clearly define and strengthen the regional AWC organizational structures. There are advantages to the West Central Model – Leadership by the One Stop Operator such as a clear chain of command and accountability. If LWIBs agree to a Co-Managed model then functional roles need to be identified and clarified for all partner staff at all levels. A clear distinction also needs to be made between the AWC Site Managers, Program Managers and the functional responsibility that goes with AWC Site Managers.

- During joint regional or statewide DWS/WIA meetings, develop agendas and sessions that include all staff to maximize "face time", learn more about each other, and create networking opportunities between the programs that promote Center success in addition to programmatic success.

- Just as the Governor's Workforce Cabinet successfully pulls together state agencies to address workforce development needs, DWS may benefit from a strategic refocus of its leadership (UI, ES, WIA, TANF, AOCs) on the AWC system vision and operational priorities.

Service Integration and Collaboration

Findings

Collaboration may qualify as one of the most often used words to describe the experience of working in the Arkansas Workforce Centers visited. Along with the overall goal of serving the needs of the customers, interviews revealed that in all locations, some form of collaboration was cited as one of the premier strengths of the current system. It is through collaborative relationships with other partners that staff feel they are able to help the customers they serve. In the regions that have progressed further along the continuum of service integration, everyone who walks through the door is seen as **everyone's** customer.

In interviews with staff there were many examples of how the focus on the customer leads to the provision of service. The focus groups confirmed that operationally, staff attempt to be aware of the various services that are available and to make referrals to partners in order to provide service that meets their customers' needs.

It is through collaboration that much of the service to business customers takes place and that enables the regions to host job fairs, employer events, onsite recruitments, and community events. The AWC system has very few dedicated Business service representatives (i.e. staff by any title that do just business services). This will be addressed more in the Business Services/Services to Employers section.

Collaboration has been at the root of the success of the Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) initiative as multiple partners have worked with both the business customer and the job seeker customer to understand the benefits of work readiness assessment. This work has also involved the Adult Education and Community College partners to provide the CRC assessments and to help job seeker customers with the remedial education needed to earn a certificate. The CRC has been an important service link to engaging employers and providing value added, tangible benefits. (See Appendix C)

As strong as the collaboration efforts have been, and as common, the mere fact that they are discussed as much suggests that the system is still working towards the fully integrated model embodied in the AWC concept. To speak of collaboration is to acknowledge that the whole is still thought of as a collection of partners, and the biggest of all the partners is DWS.

Service integration – done right – is an evolutionary and ongoing process that adapts to new information and changing circumstances. Drawing on a wide range of national research including "Benchmarking One-Stop Centers," the Kaiser Group has developed a One-Stop Service Integration Framework. The Framework identifies seven key criteria that impact service integration and operational benchmarks that are important process points for documenting progress. (See Appendix D)

⭐ Challenges

The proposed revision of the Recertification process and Criteria needs to focus on accountability and follow through related to Service Integration and Collaboration efforts. The regional business plans would become actual planning tools that are active documents and document targeted improvements.

The AWC system needs to take gains in collaboration and service integration and turn them into measurable outcomes that can be tracked by some type of a performance scorecard. This is a big step forward but it is only being suggested because Arkansas is a State where it is possible to achieve.

The primary funding streams of the present Workforce System, UI, ES, WIA and TANF have inherent differences built in to their basic structure in terms of requirements, outcomes and measures. Improving the level of service integration requires overcoming these differences and finding ways of focusing not only on the commonalities of outcomes, but on the fact that on any given day, the customer of one of these programs can easily become a customer of any of them.

Every region is engaged in, or has engaged in cross-training of staff. The most common focus for cross-training appears to be UI. Regardless of the extent of cross-training, one feature remains constant; the training is done by staff from the local region, most typically a co-worker. The challenge is to ensure the quality of that training when the delivery method is more or less peer-to-peer, with all the variation that comes from regional and individual differences in knowledge and instructional ability.

Another significant challenge for service integration is fully incorporating TEA and Work Pays into the AWC system. Staff still feel somewhat like outsiders in the system. Even State DWS officials feel as though TANF service integration in the AWCs and full integration into DWS is still a work in progress.

⭐ Promising Practices

Job Shadowing as an orientation practice for new Center employees holds promise as an effective means of familiarizing new staff to the overall operation of the Center and the roles and responsibilities of the various partners in the Center. Accommodations will likely need to be made for those hires in some of the smaller, more rural Centers operated in Arkansas, but the benefit derived from the in-person experience of the different programs and their shared goals is worth the effort it will take to promote this practice to all the regions.

Establishing this approach as a part of revised set of Certification Criteria that relates to the preparation and competence of staff makes sense.

In Forrest City, the open layout, with the Resource Room in the center and staff offices around the perimeter, encourages collaboration just because of the physical layout. Staff reported that this layout encourages and supports their philosophy that all Center Customers are everyone's customer.

National Research – "Cross-System Innovations: The *Line-of-Sight* Exercise or getting from where you are to where you want to be"

Jennifer Noyes and Thomas Corbett, with the Institute for Research on Poverty, wrote a creative paper, "Cross-Systems Innovations: The *Line-of-Sight* Exercise, or getting from where you are to where you want to be" that offers a conceptual framework on the importance of institutional milieu in human services organizations and raised four central questions.

1. What is to be accomplished, and for whom?

2. What tactics and strategies will lead to the desired outcomes?

3. Is there a good fit between the tactics and strategies chosen and the institutional milieu of each potential partner in the integrated vision?

4. What strategy is needed to bring these two into correspondence?

These questions must be addressed in order to develop an integration strategy that will improve the outcomes and transform the service experience of AWC customers.

These questions and the line of sight exercise were originally part of a white paper the Kaiser Group did for DWS in 2007 and they are even more important in 2011 as the Arkansas Workforce System is at a key opportunity point in the development of the AWC integrated service model.

Our evaluation identifies a system that has made significant progress but must now find a process to accelerate the development of AWC regions that are not fully on board with the AWC model and challenge those AWC regions prospering with the model to continue to innovate and improve.

The successful cross program integration of services starts with a clearly articulated vision of what the process is intended to accomplish. Vision matters because it serves as the foundation from which key operational decisions are made. A lack of clarity on the part of staff administering program services may contribute to similar confusion on the part of the customers being served. It is important to establish a unifying vision or blueprint to develop a service integration model that clearly articulates and differentiates departmental/partner roles and responsibilities.

Recommendations

- Cross training needs to focus on key Center-wide processes. The first step towards this is identifying the type and frequency of customer demand, and ensuring that all staff are familiar with and trained on the most common types of services that customers ask for.

- One of the biggest challenges in cross training partner staff is learning all of the acronyms used. It is recommended that an Acronym dictionary be created and put online to help all partner staff learn and understand the terms used in the AWC system.

- Use the Line of Sight exercise questions as part of local planning efforts to develop an integration strategy that will improve the outcomes and transform the service experience of AWC customers.

- The 2011 revised Business Plan/Recertification standards and criteria that our evaluation is recommending needs to have input from a cross section of AWC leaders in each region. Key to creating more accountability is to design process and outcome benchmarks that identify what they are trying to accomplish collectively, for whom, and what strategies will lead to the desired outcomes. The tactics and strategies must fit the capacity of the partners in that region.

- Incentive dollars from the State workforce funding streams need to be targeted to benchmarks met by the AWCs separate from program goals. The benchmarks would be documented and reported following a set format and reviewed quarterly by AWC leadership in a Quarterly Business Review (QBR) process.

The last two recommendations are in this section because currently all AWC success in the area of service integration and collaboration, which are pillars in the AWC model, are anecdotal or not measured. It is hard to measure success when it is not defined.

Customer Satisfaction

Findings

There were very similar findings in all seven regions reviewed for this project related to customer satisfaction. If you read the individual site reports the patterns are very clear.

There is a substantial system wide focus on quality customer service and connecting customers to needed services. Many staff pointed to DWS Director Artee Williams as the source of that focus.

Staff feel pride in many of the AWCs, they would and do recommend it to friends and family and there were more than a few staff interviewed who had been customers in an AWC.

If there were any single theme to the measurement of customer satisfaction, it would be that there is no consistent measurement program within the Workforce System and nothing that could be considered to measure customer satisfaction at the point of service.

The use of "Comment" or "Suggestion" boxes or voluntary submission of feedback from customers is a very passive approach to obtaining customer feedback, and as such is very unlikely to result in the collection of any information that will serve the purpose of improving customer processes.

There is a clear need for a systematic process that has: meaningful data, a timely reporting process and a way to respond to and use data.

If the objective is to provide customers with services that address their needs, it seems that the number one question that must be asked of each customer is whether they received what they needed and that they were able to accomplish their purpose. Collecting these answers tells the service providers and their management at each of these levels whether the system is achieving its purpose and provides information that management can use to improve the system. Gathering the feedback of the customers served is essential, however, it can only be done meaningfully at the service delivery level.

Statewide customer satisfaction survey methods are too removed from the delivery process to be of much benefit. However, statewide support for collecting this data at the local level is the way that the State level perspective can best benefit this effort.

We would also recommend that the measurement of customer satisfaction not be used as, or turned into performance targets. There is value in quantifying results and benchmarking customer satisfaction data. The objective of a service delivery organization is to provide its customers with a service that meets their expectations, and since services and the customer demands that prompt them are occurring in real time, the quality of the service depends on a series of inter-related factors. The training of the service delivery staff, the availability of resources, the ability to accurately ascertain customer demand and the knowledge of where to find the expertise certain customer demands require are a few examples of these contributing factors.

Customer satisfaction then can be an indirect measure of these contributing factors. It is a measure of the capability of these factors to contribute to the delivery of service in response to customer demand. When turned into a performance goal or target, the focus may shift from service delivery to hitting a target.

Challenges

Implementing a point of service system for measuring customer satisfaction is not a simple undertaking; however, nothing else will provide the detail managers and staff need to implement a continuous improvement program that focuses on key processes used to deliver services.

Recommendations

- Develop a consistent approach to more formally and routinely collect, compile, and share customer satisfaction data at all Centers in a region. There are some effective point of service customer satisfaction models implemented at Workforce Centers across the country. There are many tools available to accomplish this task. Long Range Systems is an electronic comment card system currently used by the Workforce Partnership in Kansas City, Kansas. This system 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 in real time. (See Appendix E)

Performance Management

Findings

The major theme for performance management is that it is a separate programmatic activity. Typically, performance is understood only by those who work within a particular program. There is very little awareness or understanding of partner agency goals. This results in One-Stop Center staff that do not clearly understand how the services they provide to any given customer may actually be leading to outcomes that benefit the existing performance measures of partners in the AWC.

The Certification Criteria, in the Measuring Success section, has a Core Standard that says "the plan describes quantified and measurable goals for the Center as a whole." It also has an Excellence Standard that "the plan identifies how partners will assist each other in meeting the individual performance standards of each organization and funding source." Neither of these are in place in any of the regions beyond occasional exchanges between managers. It would benefit the partners to work together to create strategies to meet both of these standards.

As funding becomes tighter from traditional sources, many Workforce Centers are expanding revenue streams, charging fees for service and looking for ways to maximize resources. Finding connections between existing program goals and using that awareness to collaborate on improving outcomes is a logical step. Exploring ways to tell your story to the community as an integrated collaborative AWC is important. It creates a way to show value added impact to the local area, benchmark achievements and progress, and possibly even provide a return on investment report. Clearly going beyond the current practice is an option identified as a need by staff and leaders, and a strategy needed to maximize funding and revenue.

During the interviews, there was a very mixed reaction to the suggestion that the AWCs need more accountability, awareness of partner programs and collective performance measures for the AWCs. Some staff like just having a customer service focus. For some UI staff, low error rates, timely benefits and no complaints to the Governor's office marked success. Others cited a need for better ways to measure success.

WIA staff were the most performance focused and for many, that was a frustrating process. With some of the highest negotiated WIA goals in the country, six of the nine goals are ranked one or two highest in the country, (See Appendix F) very good performance may still equal an unmet performance standard. In addition, it pushes WIA providers to enroll very few customers. Other states have examined this issue and opted for lower performance to serve higher numbers. This is a statewide issue, and DWS is seeking new negotiations with DOL.

The key findings here point to an opportunity to create meaningful benchmarks that all partners agree to and reflect the AWC impact on their communities.

✦ Challenges

For each of the regions visited, the evaluation team attempted to put together a performance profile for the region. It was relatively easy for WIA, but more complicated for all other programs. The way WIA performance is tracked does not match the regions for TEA/Work Pays. Career Readiness Certificate data collection is tracked by DWS office, which also doesn't match the WIA regions. In addition, the timeframes for collecting data are different, and it appears very little of the performance information is communicated across program lines.

The point being, there has been little focus on AWC performance as a whole, and no effective way in place to track it and report it. The Annual Report on the Workforce Investment Act produced by DWS is the closest to a regional report card. Since it is produced annually, it is not a tool that can be used to manage and direct performance.

This may not seem like a significant issue since each funding source has program performance reports, but it has implications. The AWC as a brand, as a collaborative business, and as a viable resource needs to show the community, elected officials and potential funding sources that it is cost effective and a good investment.

WIA has very high (some of the highest in the country) negotiated performance goals that the Department of Labor (DOL) passes on through DWS. This means even very good performance may show up as "not meeting" the standard. This also affects the WIA enrollment process in that the provider needs to be very selective in these decisions which results in smaller numbers of people are served in intensive services.

DWS has chosen to retain WIA monitoring responsibility through the Office of Monitoring and Compliance (OMAC). Having one of the partners holding the authority to monitor the LWIB/One-Stop Operator leadership of the region complicates things. The balance in both actions and perceptions that must be maintained so there can be WIA system improvements coming from the monitoring is considerable. At present, OMAC, as a division within DWS, has the authority to issue findings and to close those findings on all compliance issues with fiscal and programmatic rules for WIA. As careful as anyone could possibly be, this arrangement is bound to create organizational discomfort simply because it naturally pits one partner against the other. Instead of working together towards improvement, disagreements over compliance linger for months and/or years, further widening the sense of separation between DWS and WIA providers.

In a review of a sample of monitoring reports, it was noted that only one of them met the timeframe for issuing a report within 30 days of the actual review. The rest took between

6 months to slightly more than a year from the time of the review to the issuance of a report. These delays arise because of the issues found and the areas under review having the opportunity to respond prior to issuing a report. With delays of this magnitude, the value of the findings to impact either present or future WIA service delivery processes is extremely limited. This practice creates a focus on the identification of past items of WIA non-compliance and the correction of these findings rather than on quality improvement of present practice.

Each funding stream is monitored differently by different units within DWS, the evaluation team only looked extensively at the WIA process.

Promising Practices

While there is not much consistency between regions on what performance data is gathered and focused on (outside of WIA), there were some examples worth duplicating.

The Malvern Office Monthly Service report shows the number of people served on a daily basis for all main partners and services. This is an excellent benchmark that over time can give important customer flow trends, help show value to the community, and can support revenue generating proposals. (See Appendix G)

Hot Springs has a similar AWC customer activity chart (See Appendix H). They also have other tracking reports not attached to this report for employer contacts, CRCs and key train assessments.

Recommendations

- Find common performance goals to focus on (i.e. entered employment, employment retention, employment wage, education/training gains, and customers served referrals), and develop an AWC scorecard to track progress toward outcomes.

- Develop a process for all staff of the Workforce System to understand all of the performance goals of the One-Stop's programs and most importantly, how the performance of one is linked to the performance of the others. The knowledge of how staff can contribute to achieving the goals of all partner programs would provide more benefit to the customers of the system. (See Appendix I)

- DWS should work with DOL to re-negotiate the WIA standards, and link WIA to AWC performance targets.

- Develop local service integration and collaboration benchmarks, also mentioned in an earlier section of this report, for each AWC. This would be done with local leadership input, would be part of the Business Plan/Recertification Criteria and be reviewed quarterly.

- Consider moving the WIA monitoring unit in DWS to the program section and out of fiscal, or review other ways to improve the effectiveness of the process.

The Arkansas Workforce Center (AWC) Brand

Findings

The overall theme that emerged from this evaluation is that the AWC brand is more fully accepted and understood internally than externally. Almost all partners in the AWC comprehensive sites identify with the idea that when working in the AWC, everyone functions as if they were an employee of the AWC. There is inconsistency in the implementation of this concept between sites, which reflects the level of service integration achieved in different regions.

Externally, the communities in which the AWCs are located are more slowly gaining an understanding that the AWC brand represents a comprehensive solution to their educational and employment needs. Most customers continue to refer to the Centers as the "unemployment office", understandable as this continues to be one of the major customer functions that is handled in the Centers.

Challenges

The distinction between Comprehensive, Satellite, and Affiliate Centers gets blurred in some regions. This should be clarified as a part of the revisions to the Certification/Recertification Criteria and process.

The issue of not being able to file UI claims at locations that clearly display the AWC brand is confusing to customers. Many customers come into these Centers and want to apply for UI but can't because there are no UI staff present. This needs further discussion as to how this can be resolved. Potential options include cross training staff (such as in Stuttgart), or co-locating UI staff at these locations certain days of the week.

Recommendations

- Review all Centers and their current designation as Comprehensive, Satellite, or Affiliate. Create a DWS master chart of all AWCs and their correct designation after this review.

- Build on the DWS statewide AWC marketing campaign and strengthen regional marketing of the AWC Brand.

- 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/).

- One AWC region that has a promising website is Southwest (www.southwestarworks.org) There would be value in having them share their process of creating it with other regions.

Business Services/Services to Employers

Findings

There are many positives to cite from the field work for this project. There is effective collaboration in many of the regions and specific examples of partners working together to meet employer needs were numerous.

There are extensive partnerships with Economic Development, Community Colleges, Governmental Units, Chambers, Human Resource Groups like the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), and temporary placement firms.

There is a common data base (AJL) available to all partners in the AWC to use as contact management software for tracking employer contacts and assigning accounts.

There are several sector strategies developing that Partners are involved in and the use of the Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) has been very impressive Statewide, offering a practical, demand driven service to employers. All of this is accomplished without organized, Leader led Business Teams. Staff work together in many ways, but are not formed as a clearly defined team except in West Central. Many staff (i.e. Managers, Veteran Representatives, WIA and TEA Case Managers) providing employer services have significant additional duties. The resources devoted to serving employers seems small compared to the resources allocated to processing UI claims and serving job seeking customers.

In many Workforce Centers around the country, there are dedicated Business Service Representatives on well organized teams that operate with system goals, track all activities, have assigned accounts and market all One-Stop Center programs. WIA program staff are often best positioned to lead these Business Teams for a variety of reasons (i.e. it's part of their mission, their Boards have private sector members, they're flexible with staff, and they have training dollars). It is a concept Arkansas may want to pilot in one of their AWCs in the near future.

Challenges

In the current funding environment, funding a dedicated Business Services team is a great challenge. What business customers want from Workforce Systems is a partner who understands their circumstances, the nature of their business and what they regard as necessary for their success. Whether the Workforce System provides them with qualified candidates for open positions or assistance with training new or incumbent workers or help with a reduction in their workforce, it is the quality of the relationship built through listening, learning and performing that matters. The best method of

accomplishing all three is with a team of individuals from the Workforce System dedicated to serving the business customer.

Employment Services (ES) staff may occasionally go out and visit employers, however, there is no coherent business services strategy. The Veteran's Representative is required to go out and visit employers at least two times a week. There is a common theme among TEA staff that they are mainly contacting employers to develop work experience sites.

The common process in today's internet world to learn about something is to go to their website. If job seekers or employers want to learn about the Camden Center, it would be more than a One-Stop route to get there. They may be directed to Arkansas Works, and while there is a link for Workforce Centers there, it currently goes to a "file not found" page. They may also be directed to AJL or DWS's website, neither of which contain any evidence of the AWC Brand or the Camden Center. Other links may direct customers to DWS offices or SWAPDD, which is confusing when looking for the AWC Brand or the Camden Center. This is both a regional and a state wide issue. There are many examples of job seeker and employer friendly One-Stop Workforce Center websites to review if partners considered it a priority.

Promising Practices

The Soutwest Region's success with CRCs, their Business and Industry Partnership Team (especially Camden's), and their expanded external partnerships with groups like Manpower and the City of Camden are promising practices.

Jonesboro has been very successful marketing the CRC to key employers and they have multiple hires from multiple companies that use the AWC as their initial screening process. Their LWIB also actively uses the AWC.

Hot Springs has a true Business Team Lead and active involvement from the Veteran Representative and Managers with an active, organized outreach strategy to employers.

⭐ Recommendations

- The most effective Business Services teams are those that have staff that are dedicated to working with the business customers. Business Services teams need to be connected to regional Economic Development efforts and expand their resources through collaboration.

- Employer friendly websites are used nationally to interface with, and market to employers in creative ways. The AWC System has a real need and opportunity to upgrade this service.

- AWC's links to sector strategies and initiatives was not well known to many line staff. So if connections do exist, they are not maximizing the supply/demand interface. Regions need to relook at the connection between staff awareness of sector strategies and their ability to recruit and make referrals. These links may exist, but they weren't apparent in the interviews conducted.

- The use of ITAs and subsidized employment to leverage customers into market demand areas is not well tracked or documented and deserves a closer review.

Customer Flow, Facilities, and Resource Rooms

Findings

There were several common themes throughout the seven regions when asked about Center strengths. The most common theme was having a professional, friendly staff who have a genuine concern for serving customers to the best of their ability.

Consistently across regions, no information about Center wide performance was displayed. This is not surprising , given the fact that no region had any Center wide goals developed.

In the seven regions visited, Little Rock was the only facility that had expanded hours. If it is the expectation of DWS and the AWIB that AWCs have expanded hours, this needs to be addressed.

Other consistently missing items from the facilities checklist included: Little to no youth materials, and Labor Market information (LMI) that is not easily accessible. LMI is available through the Arkansas Job Link (AJL), however, there was no observation that anyone was actually using this information.

Challenges

The physical layout of a Center makes a difference in customer flow, customer service, and service integration. Centers that have distinct programmatic wings, more than one reception desk, and two Resource Rooms creates division among the job seeking customers as well as the staff.

Wait times (in particular for UI Customers) continues to be a challenge. On busy days, customers become frustrated, confused, and overwhelmed.

In several Centers, the Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) testing is completed by the customer in the Resource Room. Because Resource Rooms can get busy and have many distractions, this is not a conducive setting for test taking. In addition, customers generally begin the CRC process at the Center, then have to travel to a Community College to complete it. This is not a true One-Stop service for the customer and could pose problems for those with transportation barriers.

Several Centers cited not having TEA eligibility onsite as a weakness. Lack of privacy for customer interviews is also a challenge in many locations.

✵ Promising Practices

Of all the layouts seen, the best were those that featured an open design, where there was a clear starting point for the new customer to initially express their request for assistance and the interaction of partner staff with customers in the Resource Room is not hindered by intervening walls, hallways and cubicles.

In most Centers, a common positive theme expressed by staff was the ability to literally walk a customer over to the location of a partner program when it was appropriate to make a referral. These "walking referrals" were frequently cited as a strength of the One-Stop system.

Locating AWCs on college campuses with the range of adult education services available is a huge strength. Being located on a college campus also helps get away from the "Unemployment Office" image that is so hard for people to forget.

✵ Recommendations

- In Centers that have more than one reception desk, establish <u>one</u> common focal point of entry so in each AWC, the first point of contact is someone who can direct the customer where to go to access all available services and resources.

- The importance of the Receptionist function cannot be over stated. This is one of the most important positions in the AWC, but doesn't specifically show up in Center Certification Criteria. Discussions that include both state and local staff need to occur to explore options for fully funding a dedicated staff for this critical position in the Centers that don't already have this in place.

- In Centers with more than one Resource Room, combine them and make the single Resource Room the focal point so services are not segmented by program.

- Provide more consistent training for Resource Room staff. Create a more consistent plan for how Resource Rooms link to available resources (i.e. desktop computer icons).

- Explore options for CRC testing in a private room or quiet space. Train staff to be CRC proctors so customers can complete the CRC process in the Center and avoid having to travel to the Community College.

Appendix

Appendix A – Chart of Staff Interviewed

On-Site Interviews Completed (When staff had multiple job functions, the primary job function was chosen.)

Region	LWIB Director/ Staff/ Member	AOC	Center Manager	DWS Man/Site Manager	WIA Man/ Sup	TEA Sup	UI Sup	Bus. Serv. Rep	Vet. Rep	WIA CM /Staff	TEA/Work Pays CM	UI Staff	Resource Room Staff	Partner Staff	Total
Eastern (Forrest City, West Memphis)	1		1	2	1	2				2	3			3	15
Little Rock	1	1		2	3	1		1		2	2			3	16
Southeast (Pinebluff, Dumus)	2		1	2	2	1	1			3	2	1	4	2	21
Northwest (Fayetteville, Harrison)	3	1	1	2	2	1	2		2	2	2		2	4	24
Southwest (Camden, Magnolia, Lewisville, Texarkana)			1	2	4					2	2	1	1		13
West Central (Hot Springs)	1		1	1			1	1	1	3	2		1	3	15
Northeast (Jonesboro, Paragould)	1	1		2	1	1	1		1	2	1		1	2	14
Totals	9	3	5	13	13	6	5	2	4	16	14	2	9	17	118

Appendix B – Funding Chart

Annual Allotments to Arkansas
PY 2000 - PY 2010
As Published in the Federal Register

	Youth			Adult			DLW		
	Allotment	$ Difference	% Difference	Allotment	$ Difference	% Difference	Allotment	$ Difference	% Difference
PY 2000	$ 10,429,385			$ 10,068,804			$ 12,375,366		
PY 2001	$ 10,614,970	$ 185,585	1.78%	$ 9,622,728	(446,076)	-4.43%	$ 7,103,656	(5,271,710)	-42.60%
PY 2002	$ 10,968,513	$ 353,543	3.33%	$ 9,708,232	85,504	0.89%	$ 7,550,450	446,794	6.29%
PY 2003	$ 9,192,466	$ (1,776,047)	-16.19%	$ 8,510,825	(1,197,407)	-12.33%	$ 8,418,083	867,633	11.49%
PY 2004	$ 8,279,152	$ (913,314)	-9.94%	$ 7,660,704	(850,121)	-9.99%	$ 7,971,448	(446,635)	-5.31%
PY 2005	$ 9,550,969	$ 1,271,817	15.36%	$ 8,822,509	1,161,805	15.17%	$ 10,597,841	2,626,393	32.95%
PY 2006	$ 8,823,726	$ (727,243)	-7.61%	$ 8,175,229	(647,280)	-7.34%	$ 9,887,425	(710,416)	-6.70%
PY 2007	$ 8,704,080	$ (119,646)	-1.36%	$ 8,052,417	(122,812)	-1.50%	$ 9,505,720	(381,705)	-3.86%
PY 2008	$ 10,427,807	$ 1,723,727	19.80%	$ 9,810,398	1,757,981	21.83%	$ 13,518,488	4,012,768	42.21%
PY 2009	$ 9,385,022	$ (1,042,785)	-10.00%	$ 8,829,357	(981,041)	-10.00%	$ 7,192,470	(6,326,018)	-46.80%
PY 2010	$ 8,446,520	$ (938,502)	-10.00%	$ 7,946,421	(882,936)	-10.00%	$ 6,867,051	(325,419)	-4.52%
Average	$ 9,529,328			$ 8,837,057			$ 9,180,727		
ARRA (PY08)	$ 12,065,555			$ 5,072,930			$ 7,518,483		

AWIB Meeting Agenda   April 13, 2010   9

Appendix C – Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) Performance

DWS Office *Evaluation Sites Visited	County	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
Arkadelphia	Clark	23	66	20	109
Batesville	Fulton, Randolph ,Izard, Stone, Independence, Sharp	396	538	107	1041
Benton	Saline	149	239	67	455
Blytheville	Mississippi	206	620	317	1143
Camden*	Calhoun, Dallas, Ouachita	233	541	176	950
Conway	Faulkner, Van Buren	255	278	70	603
El Dorado*	Union	36	105	28	169
Fayetteville*	Madison, Washington	63	78	19	160
Forrest City*	Cross, Monroe, Prairie, St. Francis	92	290	123	505
Fort Smith	Crawford, St. Franklin, Logan, Sebastian	432	640	137	1209
Harrison*	Brone, Carroll, Newton, Searcy	261	420	86	767
Helena	Phillips, Lee	22	67	29	118
Hope	Hempstead, Howard, Nevada, Pike County South	272	491	179	942
Hot Springs*	Garland, Pike County North, Montgomery	292	617	176	1085
Jacksonville	Lonoke, Pulaski	512	1119	345	1976
Jonesboro*	Craighead, Poinsett	1057	2283	765	4105
Little Rock*	Pulaski	383	994	515	1892
Magnolia*	Columbia, Lafayette	32	55	21	108
Malvern	Hot Spring	55	99	22	176
Mena	Polk, Scott	39	78	24	141
Monticello	Ashley, Bradley, Chicot, Drew, Desha	109	261	129	499
Mountain Home	Baxter, Marion	263	382	65	710
Newport	Jackson, Woodruff	65	165	54	284
Paragould*	Greene, Clay	874	1911	677	3462
Pine Bluff*	Arkansas, Grant, Cleveland, Jefferson, Lincoln	361	925	354	1640
Rogers	Benton	80	140	40	260
Russellville	Conway, Johnson, Perry Pope, Yell	148	222	34	404
Searcy	Cleburne, White	401	737	140	1278
Texarkana*	Little River, Miller, Sevier	450	748	120	1318
Walnut Ridge	Lawrence, Randolph	274	582	138	994
West Memphis*	Crittenden	210	783	388	1381
Texarkana*	Little River, Miller, Sevier	450	748	120	1318
Walnut Ridge	Lawrence, Randolph	274	582	138	994
West Memphis*	Crittenden	210	783	388	1381
State Total		8045	16475	5366	29886

Appendix D – Service Integration Framework

One-Stop Framework Self-Assessment by One-Stop Sites

Criteria	Benchmarks	Capacity of Current Site to Reach the Desired Status
One-Stop Environment (facility)	• Professional Atmosphere • Customer friendly layout • Maximum use of space • Adequate technology	The points listed in the desired status provide greater description of each of the criteria. For each of the criteria, please assess the following: 1. Where the one-stop is now on a continuum from the initial one-stop design to meeting the Benchmarks? 2. What is possible: how close to the Benchmarks can the current location get? 3. What general actions should be taken to reach the Benchmarks or what is possible?
Upfront Services and Resource Room	• Accurate tracking of customers • Seamless, integrated services using all partner resources • Central "help desk" with information to guide customer choice • Adequate "resources" in resource room	
Employer Services/Business Service Teams	• Establish a coordinated employer contact system • Develop an interagency marketing plan • Standardize core business processes • Use a common data base • Establish single points of contact (Employer Account Reps) • Set system performance goals and share job leads	
Customer Focus & Continuous Improvement	• Coordinated customer satisfaction data that is timely, shared with partners and used to improve services (Employers and Job Seekers) • Common Customer Service Standards	
Teamwork & Service Integration	• Operationalize seamless service design to customers • Cross training and service collaboration • Respond to market demand with service flexibility • Active communication and organizational alignment toward common goals	
Organizational Structure	• Roles and responsibilities are clear: Board-Operators-Partners-Community • Organizational structure supports strategic objectives • Site base structure supports collaboration and performance	
Performance Management and accountability	• Measurement and sharing of program performance (goals vs. actual) monthly and quarterly • System-wide critical few indicators to measure system success	

Appendix E – Long Range Systems

Long Range Systems (LRS) is a company that produces an electronic comment card system. This comment card system is called "The Informant" and is used in restaurants, hospitals, stores, etc.

The technology helps ensure ongoing quality to customers and provides the ability to recognize trends and act on feedback from customers immediately. "The Informant" allows you to survey all customers regarding their visit each time they visit a Workforce Center. The system provides the opportunity to review reports on a daily basis by staff person, by department and by location.

The following excerpt explains how this system is being used in a Workforce Center in Kansas.

How "The Informant" works
There are four (4) different surveys loaded into "The Informant" targeted at various audiences we want to survey. The surveys are:

> 1.) Job Seeker
> 2.) Employer
> 3.) Youth
> 4.) Other (i.e. job fairs, rapid response events, workshops)

Each set of survey questions is unique to the audience being surveyed. Following each visit, please ask your customer to take 2-3 minutes to complete the short survey (approx. 7-8 questions). The survey asks questions related to their visit that day. All responses are anonymous and downloaded via a computer connection.

A picture of "The Informant" is shown below.

For more detailed information about this system, go to: http://www.pager.net/Long-Range-Systems/ECC-Video.html

Appendix F – WIA Negotiated Levels

Program Year 2010 Agreed Upon Performance Levels-Arkansas'
Ranking in Comparison to Other States

Measure	Negotiated Rate	Rank
Adult Entered Employment Rate	91%	Highest (1st)
Adult Average Six-Month Earnings	$12,530	10th
Adult Employment Retention	92%	Highest (1st)
DW Entered Employment Rate	93.5	2nd
DW Employment Retention	95.5%	Highest (1st)
DW Average Six-Month Earnings	$13,200	34th
Youth Placement in Ed. or Employ.	79.7%	2nd
Youth Attainment of Degree or Cert.	76.9%	Highest(1st)
Youth Literacy Numeracy Gains	48%	6th
Wagner-Peyser Entered Employment Rate	71.5%	6th
Wagner-Peyser Retention Rate	80.5%	21st
Wagner-Peyser Six Month Earnings	$9,500	48th

Appendix G – Monthly Service Report

January 2011
Service Report

Malvern office

Date	Adult Ed	Resource Room	WIA	Jobs	UI	Vets	Career Pathways	CADC	AARP	Job Corps	Even Start	TEA	Total
2/1/11	28	14	0	7	46	0	6	123	0	0	13	0	237
2/2/11	30	16	5	7	38	0	6	129	0	0	11	0	242
2/3/11	20	22	0	3	29	2	3	106	0	0	10	0	195
2/4/11	snow,	closed	0:00	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
2/7/11	19	31	1	8	59	2	6	118	0	0	11	0	255
2/8/11	28	14	1	5	52	1	4	123	0	0	12	0	240
2/9/11	snow,	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2/10/11	snow,	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2/11/11	0	11	0	6	23	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	42
2/14/11	25	31	0	8	40	3	7	119	0	0	11	0	244
2/15/11	29	22	2	12	22	3	6	119	0	0	16	0	231
2/16/11	31	26	1	8	35	2	6	127	1	0	12		249
2/17/11	28	15	4	7	18	0	7	107	0	0	14	4	204
2/18/11	9	13	0	6	11	0	4	107	0	0	0	0	150
2/21/11	11	0	0	0	0	0	1	29	0	0	4	0	45
2/22/11	43	28	1	9	74	2	6	177	0	0	12	0	352
2/23/11	27	13	0	7	52	1	5	168	0	0	8	0	281
2/24/11	20	14	0	9	17	2	5	106	0	0	6	0	179
2/25/11	5	15	2	6	16	0	3	99	0	0	1	0	147
2/28/11	24	26	1	12	55	1	9	127	0	0	7	0	262
													0
	377	311	18	120	590	20	84	1884	1	1	148		3558

Signed-In:

2970

Appendix H – Hot Springs Customer Activity Chart

2010 Arkansas Workforce Center Customer Activity Partner	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Grand Total
Resource Lab	1207	495	822	623	640	761	685	642	680	644	624	601	
General walk in's at WIA Reception	378	329	365	171	315	199	142	147	189	270	229	130	
WIA Office	196	202	185	222	186	149	109	57	95	110	110	280	
CADC	948	1119	1724	1606	1130	784	1274	751	1065	121	109	110	
UI	4624	3279	4763	4828	3493	3471	7082	4245	4541	2520	1404	2142	
TANF	819	1457	687	898	898	870	1155	771	911	1036	696	663	
ES	720	555	914	1027	1027	794	706	371	604	1177	761	894	
LR WIB	43	165	128	25	50	184	33	14	86	51	45	20	
	8935	7601	9588	9400	7739	7212	11186	6998	8171	5929	3978	4840	91577

Appendix I – Regional Performance Profile

Regional Profile

Program/Measure	Goal	Actual	Outcome
Workforce Investment Act (WIA)			
Adult entered employment rate			
Adult retention rate			
Adult average earnings			
Dislocated Worker entered employment rate			
Dislocated Worker retention rate			
Dislocated Worker average earnings			
Youth placement in education or employment			
Youth attainment of degree or certificate			
Youth literacy or numeracy gains			
Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA)			
Percentage of participants placed in jobs			
Retention			
Initial wage at placement			
Employment related closures			
Unemployment Insurance (UI)			
Number of applicants for UI			
Employment Services (ES)			
Entered employment rate			
Employment retention rate			
Average earnings			
Number of new job orders entered			
Career Readiness Certification (CRC)			
Number of certificates received	N/A		