



SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH
ASSOCIATES

Integration in the WorkSource System

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INTEGRATION IN THE WORKSOURCE SYSTEM

Most of the WorkSource centers in Washington are now at least six-years old, and some sites are more than ten. The time has given the WorkSource system an opportunity to work towards the One-Stop goals of efficient use of scarce public resources and convenient, seamless services to job seeker and employer customers, that is, an integrated system. The news from our research is good. We did not find any evidence, from the detailed visits to the six comprehensive centers or the surveys of staff statewide, of disconnected, duplicative workforce development services that gave rise to the One-Stop movement and the enactment of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). That said, there is still a good deal of variation in the extent and type of integration. In addition, there are multiple ways of integrating the various facets of the WorkSource structure and the services that it delivers. Explicating those differing models is the story of this report.

We posit two broad dimensions in which integration occurs in a One-Stop system: structure and service. We use the following models of these two dimensions to discuss the specific mechanisms by which WorkSource is integrating.

- **Structural integration**, in which partner programs focus on the relationship between the organizations and building the One-Stop infrastructure and its governance. The key structural elements are:
 - Partnership formation, including an array of partners through co-location or other mechanisms to reduce duplication and promote efficient service from an organizational perspective.
 - Governance
 - ~ Partner participation on the WIB.
 - ~ Partner participation in the day-to-day management of center operations.
 - ~ Resource-sharing agreements to share facilities and other infrastructure costs.
 - Staff organization and training that facilitates the One-Stop vision and goals.
 - Information systems that facilitate program relationships and services.

- Accountability systems that promote joint goals.
- **Service integration**, in which partner programs build on the structure to bring staff and services together to promote a rich, seamless set of services that will provide good outcomes.
 - Core service design serves a large number of job seekers with:
 - ~ Effective job search skills with an adequate level of individual assistance.
 - ~ An effective path to more intensive services.
 - Intensive service design that has shared components—assessment, shared case management and counseling, and placement—that take advantage of the strengths of multiple programs and offer efficiencies to the agencies and job seekers.
 - Effective employer services that bring in high quality job orders.
 - Linkage between employer and job-seeker services.

The report is organized along the lines of these two dimensions. Information was collected during site visits to six comprehensive centers and a statewide survey to which 429 WorkSource staff members responded. Exhibit 1 displays the local workforce councils and centers we visited¹:

**Exhibit 1:
Workforce Development Councils and Centers Visited**

WDC	WorkSource Center
Seattle/King	Renton
South Central (formerly Tri-County)	Yakima
Southwest	Vancouver
Olympic	Port Angeles
Eastern	Colville
Spokane	Spokane

Structural Integration

In this section, we discuss the basic structural elements of WorkSource: partnership, governance, staffing, management-information systems, and accountability, to see how the six comprehensive

¹ See the introduction to all three reports for more information on the report’s methodology and data collection.

centers that we visited have fared. We also use information gathered from the statewide staff survey.

Partnership Formation

Partnerships between the components of the WorkSource are generally quite strong. We discuss, in turn, the anchor programs, the Employment Security Department (ESD) and WIA, which serve the largest group of customers; the state-required partners, the community and technical colleges (CTCs) and WorkFirst; and the other Federally-mandated partners. We also examine the relationship with economic development, which is not a formal WorkSource partnership in any of the sites, but is central to the broad vision of integrating workforce development into the fabric of the local economy. Finally, we look at the relationships with other human-service agencies that are also typically outside the formal WorkSource partnership.

Employment Service and WIA

We found that WIA and ESD, the anchor programs, have good linkages at all the One-Stop centers we visited. They agreed to the consortium method to operate the centers and one of them is the owner/lessee of most of the sites. The resource sharing agreement for each site is serviceable, if not completely satisfying to all parties. Most sites reported that WIA and ESD staff and managers have already overcome the painful transition that typically occurs when people come from separate organizations with different employment conditions.² This pattern seems to prevail statewide, as 71 percent of all survey respondents rated ESD-WIA integration as high or very high.

Coordination is also facilitated by the concentration of program operation in ESD. ESD operates the WIA adult and/or dislocated worker program at two of our study sites and at others throughout the state. Additionally, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Veterans Employment and Training Services, and WorkFirst, all of which are considered to be very well represented in the system, are operated by ESD staff. This fact provides a natural integration at the partnership level. However, certain programs, such as Veterans Employment and Training Services, are limited by statute in the degree to which their staff can offer services to other One-Stop customers.

Despite the progress, the evidence is strong that considerable work remains to achieve a well-structured system. Even though the survey respondents gave ESD-WIA integration high marks,

² Washington is helped considerably in several centers where ESD staff deliver WIA services under contract, so workers come from the same organization. On the other side, reductions in force in ESD in 2005 were very disruptive, and bumping moved some people to other areas and jobs that they did not consider desirable.

half of these people felt that WIA and ESD could still make more progress in improving structural coordination. Nearly all sites reported some friction in the partnership. For example, one manager talked about the difficulties in getting her counterpart's staff to improve resource room coverage. The comments from survey respondents about the remaining challenges for structural integration are replete with descriptions of difficulties that ESD and WIA staff have had.

State-Mandated Partners

CTCs are an important partner in all centers that we visited. They are co-located in all centers but one. In this respect, Washington is far ahead of many other states where the local CTC has infrequent and/or limited presence. In our sites, they perform multiple functions in each site, ranging from providing Adult Basic Education (in all sites) and training (in all but one site), conducting assessment (in two sites), and providing some supportive services such as child care. Having Adult Basic Education on-site is especially helpful to a significant number of job seekers who lack basic skills, a GED, or English proficiency. In addition to the training role, the CTCs, in carrying out their role in supporting state training benefits and welfare-recipient training, coordinate financial aid with WorkSource partners. This latter role receives increased importance in Port Angeles where the coordinating committee reviews financial aid for all training participants.³

Given this diverse and seemingly vital role, we were surprised to find from the survey that WorkSource staff members rate the services of the CTCs relatively poorly. They found CTCs as being among the least important programs for helping customers obtain jobs.

One reason for this disparity might be that the partnership is perceived as benefitting primarily traditional college students. For example, several sites reported that some colleges refer their traditional degree students to come to the WorkSource center when they are looking for either part-time or permanent employment.

Including WorkFirst as a WorkSource partner and operating the program by the centers' staff is another hallmark of the Washington system, compared to most states. Placing this program in ESD and then co-locating it within the WorkSource centers, according to WorkFirst staff, has proved to be highly beneficial to the job-seeking welfare recipients who benefit from the businesslike atmosphere of their center. No respondents indicated that this partnership had any negative effects on dislocated workers and other customers. Eighty-one percent of all statewide

³ The financial aid review committee is discussed more fully in the report on financial aid.

survey respondents thought that WorkFirst was extremely important in helping customers find jobs.

Federally-Mandated Partners

The Federally-required programs, Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Basic Education, Job Corps, and Senior Community Service, have very few staff located at the visited centers, a pattern that is common throughout the country. About 60 percent of statewide respondents felt that each of the smaller programs are on site at least an adequate amount of time, compared to nearly 90 percent of respondents who thought that WIA and ESD are at least adequately present. Further, about one-third of all ESD and WIA staff felt that the centers could benefit from a larger presence from these partners because they provide important services for some universal One-Stop customers.⁴ Even if only a few customers enroll in their services, the ESD and WIA staff regularly consult with their colleagues from the smaller partners for their expertise with specialized services or target populations. The survey suggests that their influence may even extend more broadly. For example, while the co-enrollment of WIA participants in Vocational Rehabilitation is small, WIA and ESD staff in several sites noted that they have a much larger percentage of universal customers that have some less-severe disability, and their counseling and job searching advice benefits from guidance from the co-located Vocational Rehabilitation staff.

Increasing the level of staff co-location for the smaller partners, however, may be difficult. Representatives of the smaller partners indicated that, while they thought that an increased presence at the WorkSource centers would benefit their programs and customers, they did not expect to put more staff in the centers and co-locate partners due to financial constraints. For example, Job Corps and Senior Community Service have administrative cost limitations that make it difficult to contribute to the resource sharing agreement and co-locate staff.⁵ Other programs cited commitments to existing facilities in other locations. Finally, Vocational Rehabilitation staff in Renton noted that any increase in its staff at the WorkSource center would increase its commitment to providing core services to meet the new requirement from the Seattle/King Workforce Council that all co-located staff must spend at least 25 percent of their time on core services. This requirement effectively increases costs further because the staff

⁴ Trade Adjustment Assistance and Veterans Employment and Training Services are both delivered through the ESD. The most significant integration issues for these programs come in staffing and service delivery, which we discuss below.

⁵ The Senior program does provide its own participants as greeters or resource room assistants in several centers as a community-service assignment.

doing core services would be diverted from serving Vocational Rehabilitation enrolled customers who are not so numerous at the center.⁶

Local Partners

Linking workforce development with economic development was a recurring theme in our conversations with WorkSource leaders at the local level, and it is consistent with the goals of most One-Stop systems that we visited elsewhere in the country. However, no economic development agency is a formal partner, and none had staff co-located at a center. Rather, the linkages are expressed through other means. At the top level, the local economic development agency or the chamber of commerce is represented on the Workforce Development Council, a common pattern in nearly all our sites. In at least three of the sites, economic development collaborates closely with WorkSource leadership at the Workforce Council and at the CTC. Additionally, staff at the One-Stop centers can get involved in economic development indirectly in response to the hiring or other needs of an employer on a particular project.

The WorkSource system also works with a wide variety of other organizations outside the framework of the formal WorkSource partnership. The survey yielded an impressive variety of over 40 different government agencies, social service organizations (public, private non-profits, and community-based organizations), employment and temporary help agencies, and chambers of commerce that provide supportive services or other resources that job seekers need. Five of the six facilities that we visited include other tenants that are not a part of WorkSource but do provide services to WorkSource customers or become sources for WorkSource customers. Four of these are large facilities that include a wide range of local agencies. Among the most common tenants are the community action agencies, which are especially desirable to have on site because they typically provide multiple services. A number of front-line staff remarked about how important it is to have a wide variety of agencies available to meet individuals needs.

Basic Structure and Governance

Each of the WorkSource centers we visited is operated on a consortium basis among the partners with memorandum of understanding to govern their basic relationships. The centers have multiple management levels: the local board, management at the consortium level, management team at the center, and, finally, in several centers, staff teams that can make—or advise on—managerial decisions. We consider each in turn (except for consortium management, for which we did not gather data because our focus was on particular centers).

⁶ The effect of the core-service requirement is discussed further in the Job-Seeker Services section below. Spokane has a 10 percent core-service requirement for all partners, but this has not caused any reported problems, probably because it plays out only in front-end services.

- **Local Workforce Development Council.** The partners are members on the Local Council in all but one of the sites. In most sites, the ESD regional manager and the CTC representatives play a strong role while other partners participate at modest levels because those agencies do not see themselves primarily as workforce agencies.
- **Center management.** All centers that we visited have a management team with supervisors from the various agencies. This team meets periodically (weekly is most common) to handle day-to-day management of common issues. Decision-making varies, with some teams using majority voting while others use a consensus approach. The largest center we visited, Renton, also has a neutral, full-time manager.
- **Center teams.** All the centers have teams of front-line staff from various partners to examine service issues, such as adequacy of staffing, customer flow. Several reported that their decisions have been very important in the initial service designs and subsequent modifications. (Center teams are discussed further, below).

Nearly all respondents commented on the good will and trust that has built up over the years of design and implementation decisions at the center level. They felt that decision-making is practical and business-like. Spokane, however, had little need to integrate across agencies because ESD operates nearly all the programs in that center, with only limited participation from other agencies. Nevertheless, the experience of negotiating structural and service issues across programs is at least as challenging there as it is in other sites that have more partners.

Staffing Arrangements

Coordinating staff is one of the major challenges in any One-Stop system, given categorical funding, the involvement of people who had never worked together before, differing work rules and organizational cultures, and disparate individual management and supervision. Bridging these issues and getting staff to emphasize the common goals of finding customers good jobs and sharing common tasks like reception and working in the resource room and other core services can be difficult within one program, much less in an organization composed of 6 to 10 partners. Respondents at the six sites were virtually unanimous that many of these challenges had been met and staff coordination, while far from perfect, had improved dramatically since the inception of each center.

We identified several major methods that our sites use to coordinate staff:

- **Cross-program teams.** Most sites used cross-program teams as the primary mechanism for coordinating staff on center design, customer flow, services, and the common tasks. One site uses the team approach to service delivery.
- **Managerial leadership.** A number of front-line staff noted that collaborative work by managers and supervisors in the management teams in place in all sites modeled the behavior that front-line staff should use.

- **Personal relationships.** In one site, a smaller center, staff had worked together on projects long before the WorkSource center opened. They respected and trusted one another. A number of survey respondents at this and other sites indicated that coordination improved as they got to know their colleagues and see their work first hand.
- **Cross-program training.** All sites invested in some level of cross-program training to improve general understanding and promote accurate referrals between programs. These sessions ranged from formal training sessions to segments of staff meetings at which staff share recent developments. The partners in some sites have also begun to make slots in agency-based, in-service training available to other partners. One site developed desk aids that have basic facts about each program for staff to use

A major contextual factor affecting staff coordination is center size and location. The small sites outside the large metropolitan areas had built up cooperative personal relationships across programs over many years. They had to coordinate because, given their smaller budgets, they could not carry out their mission and promote workforce development in their communities without collaboration. Collaboration extends to staff willingness to cross program boundaries to help when staff are not in the center. For example, our small-center respondents, including some Veterans staff (who face explicit Federal restrictions against serving non-veterans), do not hesitate to assist in the resource room when nobody else is available. Finally, the small centers believe that they have relatively more experienced state-program staff and less turnover than urban centers. The reduced turnover occurs because staff from urban centers are less likely to exercise seniority to bump into a remote, rural area during a reduction-in-force.

Management-Information Systems

Washington has an integrated management-information system, known as SKIES, to manage program data from multiple programs for all WorkSource staff. ESD developed the system to improve reporting accuracy, measure performance across programs, and increase efficiency by reducing the aggregate amount of data entry. The designers also hoped that it could contribute to One-Stop integration by providing a common platform for case management.

The experience, however, appears to fall short of expectations. ESD staff members, including those from Veterans, Trade, and WorkFirst programs, must use the system for all program activity and have no alternative. However, WorkFirst staff must re-enter all data in the Social and Health Services database. WIA staff statewide must use SKIES for all official reporting, but only four sites rely on it for case management and internal program management. Two other sites have their own database for case-management purposes, and thus incur additional data entry and other costs.

Use of SKIES by other partners is increasing. Many partners in the sites we visited and partner respondents statewide on the survey indicated that they are using SKIES to learn about the characteristics of their customers and to input data on the services that they provide. The general feeling is that the system is slowly improving and will be more useful in time.

A smaller, but still significant, proportion of WorkSource employees are using the case-management function of SKIES. However, some site visit respondents (including WIA staff) at two sites felt that the shared functionality inherent in SKIES violates confidentiality requirements in their programs. Consequently, they do not put meaningful information into the case-note fields. Instead, they keep notes on paper.

Fortunately, customers are probably not affected by any duplicate entry. Only a single customer of the 40 job seekers in the focus groups we conducted mentioned that he had to provide characteristics information more than once.

WorkSource also implemented a swipe-card system to provide detailed information about core-service usage and visits for intensive services by all customers. Five of the six sites still use the swipe-card, but none indicated that it served any useful function other than to provide an estimate of the total number of customers coming in the door. The swipe card data are not compatible with SKIES.

Performance Accountability

Disparate accountability systems have been viewed generally as an obstacle to One-Stop integration. Thus, both the Federal (Common Measures) and Washington state (Government, Management Accountability and Performance) governments have instituted new accountability measures designed, among other things, to align multiple programs. We found a relatively low level of interest among front-line staff in these new accountability systems. Instead, most staff are knowledgeable, and concerned, about their respective program measures and are quite skeptical about the effects of these new measures and any new accountability procedures.

Conclusions about Structure

Most of the sites have so far focused successfully on structural issues of their partnerships. They generally felt that appropriate partnerships had been formed with key agencies, even if much remains on the agenda in negotiating the extent of staff co-location and services available. Only a few sites wish to add some additional partners, but these appear to be smaller programs that would add services for small segments of job seekers.

Of course, the level of financial support—partially dependent on the extent of partner co-location—remains a persistent and thorny issue. Several respondents felt that their hard-won progress could be eroded by financial pressures from flat or declining allocations. Nearly all managerial respondents and quite a few front-line staff noted the absence of dedicated funding for the One-Stop system put great financial pressure on the larger programs, which bear most (or nearly all in some cases) of the costs. Smaller partners and potential partners limit co-location or do not participate at all because they cannot afford the costs required by the resource sharing agreement.

Durable partnerships must benefit all the parties. Although partners appear to question the costs frequently, there is an emerging consensus that the partnerships are indeed beneficial even for those agencies that started out in WorkSource because of a statutory requirement. Vocational Rehabilitation and WorkFirst field staff that work in the centers have become quite enthusiastic about WorkSource because their customers are benefiting from WorkSource job matching and other services and have better access to employers. Even more important, the business-like atmosphere and the contact with dislocated workers and other relatively skilled people provide a highly motivating atmosphere. On the other hand, some other customers, such as seniors, youth, and people with certain psychiatric disabilities, according to the partners that serve them, find the atmosphere challenging, especially in the larger centers that are crowded and bustling. Senior Community Service program staff, for example, felt that older job seekers are more comfortable if they have specialized staff to help them, but the Senior programs have almost no capacity for co-location.

Job-Seeker Services

Job-seeker services in all the WorkSource centers that we visited are built around WIA's model of tiered services: core services for the universal customer and intensive and training services under WIA and other partner programs for those who cannot find any job (or a self-sufficient job) through core services. The law recognizes that some job seekers have additional needs because of disability or limited basic skills, and thus it requires that other programs, like Vocational Rehabilitation and Adult Basic Education, participate in the One-Stop system.

The tiered system provides the basic outline for this part of the report. We discuss how the structure that the partners have built operates to market job seeker services and deliver them through core and intensive services. We reserve the discussion of training services for the Financial Aid Consolidation report.

Marketing Job-Seeker Services

Integration appears to have helped in the marketing of job-seeker services. Staff report, and some job-seeker focus-group members confirm, that the brand name of WorkSource is now widely associated with the state's One-Stop centers. Having a single place helps people to think of the centers as the place to find a job, much as they formerly thought about the "unemployment" office. The brand and services are now considered sufficiently well known that there is little need for overt marketing activities to job seekers. Only two of the six sites indicate that they still market their services, but the other centers rely entirely on word-of-mouth.

Core Services

Job Searching

Employment-related core services at the centers we visited primarily consist of job matching, a series of seven job-search workshops created by ESD, and a collection of self-service computer programs in the resource room. These are standard across the WorkSource system. Each center we visited also has a resource room to support self-service job searching, although the breadth and depth of available tools largely varies with the size of the facility rather than the extent of integration. Additionally, most sites have a computer lab to improve customers' basic computer skills through self-paced applications, and the resource rooms usually have more information about a range of community resources.

All sites perform an initial triage at a greeter station or front desk, with most people being referred to a formal orientation, resource room or workshop as appropriate. In four sites, customers may be referred immediately to a specific program or intensive-service provider if they express a specific intent for their job search. For example, if the customers are interested in training, they are sent to WIA. Nevertheless, those partners would initiate the same core services if there were no reason to move that individual immediately into intensive services.

This wide array of core services from the different partners is very important to job seekers. Nearly all our job seeker respondents expressed satisfaction in the number and types of services available. Some respondents indicated that these services opened their horizons and changed the way they plan to look for a job. Most respondents recognized that this diversity comes from different partners, although the panelists at two centers only recognized the center as an entity and did not know about the different component programs in which they were registered.⁷

⁷ Although it is tempting to attribute this completely transparent view of this latter group to a high degree of integration, it is equally plausible these job seekers have a low awareness of details that are not important to them.

The core services are staffed by the ESD in all sites, but WIA staff share the duties in four centers. In these four centers, there was a high degree of collaboration at the management and staff levels to craft the specific service design. Moreover, this collaboration continues, as all centers regularly examine how these initial designs have worked and take steps to revise them in the light of customer satisfaction information and the various measures of performance.

Despite the level of collaboration between ESD and WIA in the four shared-service sites, service integration still appears incomplete, especially in the large centers. The major problem is that job seekers in the resource room are likely to need greater staff assistance to succeed in their job search than they are getting. Staff acknowledge this deficit, despite specific efforts in each center to give job seekers some individualized attention very early in their encounter with WorkSource.⁸ Neither WIA nor ESD has sufficient resources by itself to resolve the problem. Wagner-Peyser funds have steadily eroded for over 20 years, and recently reduced adult and dislocated worker allocations hamper WIA contributions. While the heart of the problem lies in the lack of adequate resources for core services and other system components, the categorical nature of each program remains an obstacle to local solutions. WIA staff reduce their availability for core activities because of their responsibility for individual appointments in intensive/training services, while ESD staff remain tethered to their computers to service job-matching activities. Only Vancouver feels that its team approach mobilizes sufficient resources to produce the desired result. At least one Workforce Development Council, Seattle, has recognized the need for increased support for core service by requiring that all partners contribute at least 25 percent of staff time to core services.⁹ Renton's management indicates that the partners hope to revamp their customer-service plan with these additional resources.¹⁰

While service integration and additional resources may be an effective medium-term solution to providing more individualized help to customers, they may have differing effects in the shorter term. The 2005 incorporation of WorkFirst into the WorkSource centers brought both additional

⁸ SPR's *Evaluation of Self-Service* for the U.S. Department of Labor has found that the largest proportion of users of the One-Stop system is composed of relatively low-skill individuals, many of whom are not adept with computer-based resources. Similarly, SPR's evaluation of the Philadelphia One-Stop system found that most customers had only one or two visits to the One-Stop centers and few found jobs within the first quarter after their visit. The evidence in Philadelphia suggested that the short durations in services and poor short-term employment outcomes come from the lack of personal attention from staff (Jeffrey Salzman, et. al., "Evaluation of the Philadelphia CareerLink., 2005, unpublished).

⁹ Spokane has a 10 percent core-service requirement, but this is largely consumed by front-desk duties and applies to a limited number of non-ESD staff.

¹⁰ Facility design is another potential obstacle to collaboration between ESD and WIA. Two facilities put WIA and ESD on separate floors. In Port Angeles, this separation appears quite permeable, while in Spokane it appears to be a barrier to collaboration.

staff and customers. In Yakima, this was a very positive development. The additional customers and staff to support them provided sufficient additional customer volume that the center was able to increase the frequency of its job-search workshops. In contrast, Renton reported an initial imbalance, as a new cohort of WorkFirst customers started to use the job-search workshops, but WorkFirst staff were not participating in delivering the workshops at levels commensurate with their number of customers. The center's management intervened and successfully requested that WorkFirst lead more workshops to carry their share of the load.

Most other partners contribute to core services primarily by sharing front-end duties of reception and orienting new customers about their program, with limited staffing for the resource room. In a few centers, however, these other partners provide marginal support for some substantive core activities such as workshops.

Moving from Core to Intensive Services

Core services are the necessary gateway in a tiered system to intensive services for those who need more help in finding a job. So, a well-integrated system must have an effective method for connecting customers to intensive services. All the sites have a credible method to connect customers to WIA. The three smallest sites we visited rely essentially on personal relationships. They have a smaller numbers of customers, even relative to their smaller staffing patterns, allowing them to spend more time with individuals than their counterparts in the larger centers. There is also generally a closer working relationship between core staff (predominantly ESD) and WIA staff to smooth the transition.

Other centers, such as Vancouver and Renton, use a team approach with staff from all partners reviewing individuals who are not making good progress towards employment in core services. Spokane (Renton also) relies predominantly on its job-search workshops to identify those who may need more services. Finally, as noted above, at least three sites pass their customers to WIA immediately if an individual expresses interest in training. All those sites move these customers into core services, but they have already established a personal connection to an individual staff member, which carries very high value for some customers. This personal relationship may be even more important to customers than the integration of services.¹¹

Disabled or basic-skills deficient customers who self-identify are referred immediately to Vocational Rehabilitation or Adult Basic Education. Those who do not self-identify who are later found by staff during core activities to have a disability or deficiency are also referred to the

¹¹ A substantial number of focus-group participants personalized their experience with WorkSource, attributing their customer satisfaction entirely to the efforts of a single individual staff member who was able to secure the things that they needed, whether it was enrollment in another program or securing additional financial aid.

appropriate provider as soon as practical. However, in the case of Vocational Rehabilitation, an appointment may be delayed, because few centers have full-time Vocational Rehabilitation staff and some of those do not carry caseloads.

Intensive Services

Intensive services cover a broad range of WorkSource partner programs. We examine the key processes that common across programs to examine the extent of integration.

Assessment

The interest in sharing formal assessments among partners is common in all centers we visited, and most staff whom we interviewed indicated they routinely share assessment results. Statewide, about 40 percent of respondents reported that they get the results of the assessments, and nearly all who received assessment results considered them useful in their continuing work with a customer.

We observed two integrative mechanisms in this area. The most common is to share the results of an assessment conducted during core services or by another partner, as noted above. However, sharing assessment results among One-Stop partners is difficult. Core services in all sites uses the Choices CT and some sites have the Employment Readiness Scale computer applications. While these applications are considered by several partners to be very useful, the computer system has no capacity to record the results and it is thus difficult for staff to use later. Some staff ask customers to bring a paper printout with them to subsequent appointments, but few customers print, retain, and bring the results with them.

The second integrative mechanism is to develop a common assessment system for the center. We found a few examples of this. In at least two sites, the CTC conducts assessment for all intensive customers. In one other site, a WIA staff member did assessments for all programs (but this integrative mechanism appears likely to end because the assessment professional was laid off at the time of the site visit). Elsewhere, Vocational Rehabilitation finds the Employment Readiness Scale and Choices assessments very helpful for their customers and has adopted their use outside of the WorkSource centers.

Case Management and Counseling

Case managers at all sites reported that they collaborate with colleagues from other programs to counsel customers on a regular basis, especially those who may have barriers to employment. For example, many customers have mental health problems and disabilities that are obstacles to receiving service or obtaining employment but not serious enough to make it likely that they would ever become enrolled in Vocational Rehabilitation, given the program's waiting lists.

Nonetheless, WIA and ESD staff indicated that they regularly consult with Vocational Rehabilitation staff to get guidance on how they can serve these customers better. Some Vocational Rehabilitation staff will even interview these customers directly to assist in service provision if they self-declare a potential disability. Overall, Vocational Rehabilitation stationed at the centers felt that this type of informal help contributes to improving center outcomes.

Notwithstanding these examples, counseling and case management are largely individual program activities. While staff readily refer some customers to other activities for supplementary activities or financial aid, the counseling function appears to remain with the first staff member who assists the customer as part of intensive services. Indeed, a large number of focus group participants indicated that it was a single individual who is responsible for all their services, even though they are enrolled in additional programs. Thus, the counseling model across programs is a coordinating one, preserving the primary relationship between the principal staff member and the customer while obtaining the benefits of specialized expertise or other program resources.

Finally, as noted in the section on Management-Information Systems, the only common form of integration in case management in these cases is the use of the SKIES to obtain customer characteristics. If a customer enrolls in a program besides WIA, case management information is handled in a separate system.

Placement from Intensive and Training Services

Placement from an intensive service is an area that normally benefits from integration. A customer could draw on the ESD job-matching system for job orders, job-searching workshops conducted at the center, and the strong connections that partner staff may have to particular employers who have hired similar customers in the past. In keeping with this, the statewide survey suggests that there is a substantial amount of collaboration occurring, with 79 percent of respondents affirming that they work with partners or use partner services when they help their customers find a job.

The site visits, however, show that a group of staff largely relies on their own resources for placement. First, WorkFirst and Vocational Rehabilitation staff do provide direct placement assistance to most of their respective customers. In all sites, these staff tend to rely on their own resources, because their customers typically require substantial staff assistance that is not

typically available in the resource room.¹² Many of their customers, however, had already received job-search skill enhancements from the workshops and other core services.

WIA staff also often carry out their own placement work for customers who are completing training, a pattern that is confirmed by a portion of the focus-group participants who talked about the importance of a single key staff member who helped them out with all their concerns. Others suggest that customers who cannot find jobs on their own or with help from a training school should come to the resource room and use ESD job-matching and other core services. Here too, a portion of the focus group confirmed this pattern. It is important to note that variation exists more across staff within each center than across centers. Thus, it appears that most sites leave placement to the professional discretion of the staff. In only one center, did we find that there is a consistent pattern of reliance on collaboration—Vancouver training graduates and other people leaving intensive services get placement help from the business unit, which is composed of several partners.

Employer Services

An increased emphasis on service to employers is a hallmark of strategies that One-Stop centers across the country are now using to improve their outcomes and reach higher-paying employers. In this section, we examine how integration has affected Washington efforts in this direction. We examine the organization and staffing and the typical services provided, and the link between employer and job-seeker services.

Organization and Staffing

All the WorkSource centers have recently re-organized their business services to emphasize the business customer, and all have adopted the account representative model with a single point of contact for each business customer. According to this model, the representative visits the business and learns about the employer's needs.

The three largest centers in our sample—Renton, Spokane, and Vancouver—have stand-alone business units with full-time staff and dedicated space at the center for employer use. The other centers use part-time staff. All centers, except Vancouver, use a team approach with both WIA and ESD staffing. Renton, which operates as part of a local area wide business team, adds staff from several operators of affiliate WorkSource centers, including two CTCs. Vancouver relies

¹² Nevertheless, we found one important example of collaboration for disabled customers. One ESD manager noted a 2005 ESD and Vocational Rehabilitation collaboration to place less severely disabled persons who were on waiting lists but were not likely to get services. The project reduced the size of the list.

entirely on WIA staff. Yakima's team includes Vocational Rehabilitation staff, while a Port Angeles Veteran's representative helps part-time in that center.

Integrating staff with different backgrounds and ways of doing business has been difficult in several sites, but all those who reported difficulty located it in the past. These developments may be quite common statewide, as 79 percent of all respondents said that they collaborate with partners in serving employers.

Employer Services Provided

Hiring-related services predominate at these WorkSource centers, just as they do throughout the nation. The primary service is of course job-matching, the taking of an order and filling it with a highly-qualified job seeker. Nearly all the sites provide labor market information and will do testing/assessment for employers to ensure that all in the applicant pool will meet the employer's needs. The employer sample in our focus groups generally had high praise for these services, hardly surprising because the panelists were selected for their use of multiple services and longer experience.

However, the employers are not especially aware that these services are the product of an increasingly integrated system. None indicated that they had previously received calls from multiple programs, nor did any think that the quality of job applicants was higher recently than it was in the past. However, they like the new emphasis on business with a dedicated business unit/team and with an account representative who visits them and understands their business.

Integrating Job Orders and Applicants

In addition to the collaboration across agency and program lines, a well-integrated One-Stop system should also integrate the way it serves its two major customers, the job seeker and the employer. SPR's previous research on business services suggests that a key factor in improving service quality and reaching more employers is refining the quality of the job referral. Thus, business units, in addition to refining the employer's job order through a better understanding of employer needs, should align their efforts with staff members working with job seekers. Business-unit involvement addresses the common tendency of job-seeker staff members to be strong advocates for their customers who may refer less qualified candidates unless this collaboration takes place.¹³ While most of the Washington sites that we visited have improved job order quality and are cognizant of the referral problem, only one, Vancouver, has a

¹³ Kate Dunham, Jeff Salzman, and Vinz Koller, [Business as Partner and Customer under WIA: A Study of Innovative Practices](http://spra.com/pdf/Business_as_Partner_and_Customer_under_WIA_1131c.pdf), http://spra.com/pdf/Business_as_Partner_and_Customer_under_WIA_1131c.pdf

systematic commitment to full alignment of the matching process. Its business team controls all referrals and provides specific training to job seekers on how to meet employer requirements. One other site, Renton, is planning a more systematic alignment, but, at this time, the only mechanism is to brief job seeker staff on business developments and to invite them to the business service-unit meetings on a voluntary basis.

Conclusions

Overall, the basic structure of the partnerships in the six WorkSource sites shows a maturing operation, reflecting an initial focus—according to our managerial respondents—on structural issues. Not surprisingly, we found that the progress that their WorkSource centers have made reflects this focus. Partnerships are stable and viable, and staff appear to be growing increasingly comfortable with each other. While important improvements in structural issues remain to be accomplished at the operational level, the broad outlines of an integrated system appear settled at the strategic level.

Service integration, however, is more complex. All the sites have certainly achieved a level of integration that brings multiple programs and resources to the customers smoothly, even if not yet completely seamlessly. Perhaps the biggest challenge is to find the resources to provide sufficient help to serve a large number of self-service customers who need more individualized attention. A major obstacle to meeting this challenge, as nearly all respondents reminded us, is the shortage of overall funding and the categorical basis of that funding.

That said, there is still considerable room to organize the available resources to improve service. The centers that have emphasized team approaches appear to have made the most progress, probably because a well-functioning work-team bridges the gaps across programs. On the other hand, the small centers, because of their long history of working together, may be able to meet such challenges quite successfully on an ad hoc basis.

Our report focused entirely on how WorkSource brings together diverse agencies and programs to help customers at the centers. But service integration has also had at least some effect on the external operation of constituent programs. We found two examples. First, WIA and ESD staff in several sites co-locate staff at some CTCs primarily to support regular WorkSource customers at the schools. But these staff members also serve traditional college students by helping them with placement for part-time jobs while in school and permanent jobs after they complete degree or certificate work. Second, a Vocational Rehabilitation manager noted that WorkSource participation had given her program several assessment tools, but more importantly, the ongoing contact with diverse workforce services and the process of configuring those services has improved her own agency's overall approach to employment for the agency's customers.