

"Better Coordinated Programs Serve Workers in Need"

SUBMITTED BY SCOTT B. SANDERS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES <u>ssanders@naswa.org</u>

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TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

I. Introduction

Chairman Boustany, Ranking Member Doggett, members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity and honor to share with you some of the efforts states have made to better integrate programs to serve those in need and the challenges facing the states and the public workforce system.

My name is Scott B. Sanders, and I serve as Executive Director of the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA). NASWA is an organization of state administrators from all 50 states, Washington DC and 3 territories, of the publicly-funded state workforce system. Our members administer various combinations of critical programs including: the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), employment services, training programs, unemployment insurance, vocational rehabilitation, employment statistics and labor market information, and social service programs. One of NASWA's strategic goals is to drive the national workforce agenda.

Before joining NASWA, I served as Commissioner of the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD). The Indiana DWD operates the state's workforce training programs under WIOA, unemployment insurance, labor market statistics, and adult basic education programs.

II. Overview of the Nation's Workforce Development System

The nation's economy is slowly recovering from the recent recession; however, our jobless rate remains relatively high in some parts of the country. With the national unemployment rate in September at 5.1%, there were still 26 states at or above the national average, which ranged from a high of 7.3% in West Virginia to a low of 2.8% in South Dakota. Many states are now feeling the budgetary impact from the drop in crude oil prices that have fallen by almost \$40 per barrel over the past year, as well as the impact of switching away from coal to cleaner burning fuel sources. In addition, according to the US Census Bureau, over the past four years, the number of people in poverty at the national level has not statistically changed from the previous years and totals approximately 47 million individuals. Some of these individuals are also served by the public workforce system.

On July 22, 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law and was designed to assist job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market, and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. Congress passed the Act by a wide bipartisan majority. It was the first legislative reform of the public workforce system in 15 years. WIOA superseded the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) and amended the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, the Wagner-Peyser Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In general, the Act took effect on July 1, 2015, the first full program year after enactment.

The States are excited about the potential of WIOA, the ability to coordinate the delivery of services, creating regional workforce planning and sector based strategies, spurring economic growth, growing family incomes and getting people to work.

Over the past year, NASWA compiled information on each state workforce agency to view the programs they administer. (*A map of the various state structures is included on page 9.*) There are currently 13 different types of agency structures, based on programs, being utilized across the states. The most common structure is a state agency that handles programs funded by WIOA, unemployment insurance (UI), Wagner Peyser, Trade Adjustment Act, labor market data and reemployment of veterans. There are 23 states that currently have this structure.

There are currently 14 state workforce agencies that also operate vocational rehabilitation programs, eight agencies that coordinate adult education programs, and six workforce agencies that have some role in administering Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

III. Implementation of WIOA

With the implementation of WIOA beginning in earnest, states and their general assemblies are beginning to examine the transfer of adult education, vocational rehabilitation or TANF potentially into the workforce agency, or just improving coordination among all programs. At a minimum, when constructing a state WIOA unified and combined plan, workforce agencies are exploring ways to partner with other state agencies that handle these programs.

Many states view the WIOA combined planning process as a platform for better coordinating programs to serve workers and families in need. Over the past year, they have begun the preparation of their formal state WIOA implementation plans. The state planning process provides an opportunity for state, regional and local policymakers to commit to a common vision. In these plans, states should articulate how different programs, agencies, and stakeholders will work together to execute key strategies that will include sector partnerships, career pathways, cross-program data and measurement, and job-driven investments. On paper, state entities plan to work together, or potentially plan to merge to gain efficiencies. That may seem simple, but the challenges of intertwining staff, braiding dedicated funding steams, integrating disparate computer systems, creating common data definitions and reporting results on a limited budget will continue to be a serious challenge.

Specific to the task facing this subcommittee is the importance of mentioning WIOA is driving better coordination of services and creating more flexibility in the workforce system to serve low-income and undereducated populations. Below are specific examples from WIOA. This list is not exhaustive, but serves as a reference point. WIOA has:

- 1. Created common performance metrics, definitions and reporting requirements within the workforce system.
- 2. Created flexibility in training options, including allowing pay for performance contracts.
- 3. Loosened restrictions on training funds so they could be used by individuals who cannot obtain Pell Grants or who need additional assistance beyond Pell Grants.
- 4. Eliminated the requirement that individuals pass through multiple layers of services before starting training.
- 5. Increased flexibility for adult basic education, literacy and English language services to include integrated education and (workforce) training.

- 6. Expanded eligibility for workforce services to people receiving or who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and to those who are homeless.
- 7. Restoring the governors' 15% set-aside.

Looking toward further coordination within the social services spectrum, the same principle applies: more flexibility for states. This is what will help WIOA be successful and what can aid in reaching the individuals within the social services spectrum, whether they be receiving benefits under TANF, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), unemployment insurance or are underemployed.

IV. Indiana: Challenges Working within Different Geographic Boundaries

In my role as Commissioner of Indiana DWD, we constantly worked to improve our agency's relationship with various economic development groups and educational providers but were continually challenged by other agencies working within different geographic boundaries. (*The Indiana chart is included on page 10.*)

The chart shows the Indiana geographic boundaries for the following economic development groups and educational entities: Indiana DWD Workforce Service Areas, Indiana Economic Development Corporation Business Development areas, Small Business Development Center and areas, Ivy Tech Community College Campuses and Regions, Family Social Services Administration's Division of Family Resources Regions (administers TANF), Department of Education Service Areas, Indiana Association of Career and Technical Education Districts, and Indiana Economic Development Corporation Regional Economic Development Organizations.

The different jurisdictional boundaries for these eight delivery models in Indiana serves as an example of the internal challenges many states face when trying to coordinate programs even within its own borders and dealing with the existing delivery system of various programs. In addition to the challenge of multiple jurisdictional boundaries, siloed funding and regulatory sources further complicate the seamless coordination of services.

In an effort to realign some adult services across the state, in 2011, the administration of Indiana's adult basic education programs were moved from the Department of Education to the Indiana DWD statutorily. This transfer integrated adult basic education and (workforce) training within one agency, but as a result placed the Indiana DWD under the auspices of the US Department of Education ED along with the US Department of Labor (USDOL). Indiana DWD soon discovered that basic education funds were not able to be cross-utilized for entry level workforce training certifications. This initially posed difficulties for the state in trying to best serve undereducated Hoosiers with siloed funding sources. With the passage of WIOA, these restrictions have been lessened as more flexibility between the programs has been introduced, but the job of navigating between two federal agencies and their rules and requirements continues to exist.

During the past year, there has been improved coordination between the adult basic education program at Indiana DWD and the Family Social Services Administration's Division of Family Resources. This coordination has resulted in helping to educate those disadvantaged Hoosiers

who lack the high school equivalency certificates they need to find gainful employment and to assist them in moving off of poverty programs. This type of effort to coordinate services is being repeated across multiple programs in every state.

V. Louisiana: Example of Integrating and Innovative Programs

Another example of an agency integrating programs is the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) which absorbed the Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) into their agency in 2010. The results have been very positive. The combination of LWC and LRS has resulted in LRS meeting its federal measures for the past two consecutive years and shows integration can work.

Additionally, LWC is about to go "live" with the country's first fully integrated UI/workforce development information technology platform. LWC staff will be able to manage all aspects of a client's case file, from UI eligibility to training and placement, in the same software program. Clients will have vastly improved self-service capability, whether it is job seekers managing training and job search, UI claimants looking for claim status, or employers needing to manage their accounts or job postings. This powerful tool is going to be an essential part of WIOA implementation.

Louisiana has also cultivated an effective coalition with business and industry and higher education. A strong example of this is the Workforce Investment for a Stronger Economy (WISE) Fund. The WISE Fund has generated more than \$70 million of public and private funds for universities and technical colleges around the state to prepare students for high-wage, highdemand jobs as indicated by business and industry and the LWC's industry and occupation forecasts. Colleges competed with each other based on the degrees and certificates they could commit to producing in fields like computer science, engineering and the building trades. To qualify for funding, the schools had to raise at least a 20 percent private match from a business partner. Approximately 20 percent of the state funding was distributed based on federally funded research the universities perform.

These actions and relationships in Louisiana are helping in their implementation of WIOA as there already exists a high degree of coordination of services among workforce, education and economic development.

VI. Examples of State Workforce Agencies handling Social Service Programs

In 2012, the Utah Legislature adopted the Intergenerational Poverty Mitigation Act requiring the Department of Workforce Services, to study and evaluate administrative data to determine whether the anecdotal evidence aligned with the reality for families utilizing public assistance. It required Executive Director Pierpont's Department to release the data in an annual report, with a focus on understanding the challenges and barriers children in poverty face.

Jon S. Pierpont, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Workforce Services testified last Thursday, October 29, 2015, before the Senate Finance Committee on a hearing titled, "Welfare and Poverty in America". In his testimony, Executive Director Pierpont described how Utah has focused on the families struggling to break free from the cycle of poverty, passed from one generation to the next, and known as "intergenerational poverty."

As stated in Utah Department of Workforce Services' Fourth Annual Report on Intergenerational Poverty, Welfare Dependency and the Use of Public Assistance, "In the past year, Utah has made progress in removing barriers that impede the stability and self-reliance of families experiencing intergenerational poverty. The Intergenerational Welfare Reform Commission released Utah's Plan for a Stronger Future: Five- and Ten-Year Plan to Address Intergenerational Poverty. This ambitious plan is a roadmap to address intergenerational poverty through the establishment of five- and ten-year goals. The primary five-year goal emphasizes the importance of alignment and coordination across agencies serving families." Between 2013 and 2014, the share of both the adult and child intergenerational poverty cohorts decreased slightly.

In Texas, the TANF work program is operated by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) which is also responsible for US Department of Labor programs, such as WIOA Title I, Wagner-Peyser Employment Services and Trade Adjustment Assistance. They also administer employment programs under the jurisdiction of the US Department of Education–Adult Education and Literacy, and will administer Vocational Rehabilitation which transfers to TWC in September 2016. TWC, in coordination with SNAP Employment & Training, also operates subsidized child care to provide low-income families with one of the most critical supports they need to work or attend education/training.

This integration allows for a strong labor market connections for TANF recipients. They have the benefit of receiving services in America's Job Centers, and can take advantage of resources that are available to all job seeker, like resume writing workshops, job search resource rooms, and access to job openings and leads cultivated by job development staff. Additionally, the integrated model promotes coordinated administrative and management functions, coordinated intake and tracking systems, and ensures the goal of becoming employed is shared, regardless of what funding source is being used to assist a job seeker.

Ohio, in 1999, created the Department of Job and Family Services in order to consolidate administration of both the TANF and the WIA workforce development system programs. The state moved quickly toward structural integration and focused on a "no wrong door" policy to improve access to employment services.

In this integrated arena, TANF currently provides a major portion of the workforce system's infrastructure operating costs. However, despite the close structural integration of the programs, full programmatic integration has been complicated because the federal reporting metrics for the two programs are not aligned. TANF measures are based on a state's ability to successfully meet the required work participation rate, which is largely a process measure based on individual attendance in countable activities. Alternately, workforce measures have historically been based on long-term client outcomes that are dependent on a state's ability to facilitate job entry, better-than-average median earnings and credential attainment for customers.

WIOA expands the overlap between targeted populations in TANF and WIOA (formerly WIA) and provides new opportunities for developing innovative, job-driven programs that align

services across systems. This year, Ohio passed a new law, which fully integrates funding from TANF and WIOA to create a new program for low-income youth ages 16-24. The program, called the Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program (CCMEP), mandates a single client-centered case management approach and refocuses the efforts of all system partners. CCMEP requires local service providers to achieve specific employment, retention, earnings and educational outcome metrics in order to continue receiving funding. There are future plans to expand the program to additional populations.

VII. Challenges in Improving Coordination of Integrated Programs

We applaud Congress passing WIOA, but the sheer passage of the bill does not mean the coordination and integration of the various programs is immediate. Pushing integration through the states is challenging and could be enhanced if federal agencies are united and better coordinated. As a part of WIOA, agencies such as Indiana DWD and others mentioned previously, will have to create strategies to work across internal state boundaries to effectively execute and deliver services while aligning performance and reporting. In states that are still siloed by multiple agencies delivering similar programs, the challenges to implement will be even greater.

While most of WIOA became effective this past July, the final regulations implementing WIOA will not be released until this spring. As a result, states are in the difficult situation of moving ahead with WIOA implementation, but with the understanding that what states put in place now, may change once the final regulations are released. And while the USDOL has been very helpful in providing operational guidance; the ED and the Department of Health and Human Services, have been limited in their guidance. As states are working with their new partner agencies to integrate and collaborate on the programs, the federal framework is creating a hurdle for many states, especially those that have not worked with Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Education, TANF or other programs. Some of the other challenges states encounter in coordinating WIOA related programs are insufficient integration at the federal level and lack of coordination in creating unified or combined plans.

Some of the state issues that need to be resolved are: one-stop funding and procurement; the creation and reporting from the eligible training provider lists; building information technology platforms to share and match data, including wage records, among agencies and states; meaningful performance accountability standards; integration of the unemployment insurance system as "reemployment"; indicators for employer services and satisfaction; and tight budgetary constraints in states.

VIII. Opportunity for Improved Coordination with Social Service Programs

Thanks to this Committee's leadership with the enactment of The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012, temporary funding was provided to states for Reemployment and Eligibility Assessments (REA) activities and Reemployment Services (RES) to workers who were receiving federal Emergency Unemployment Compensation.

Prior to passage of this law, many UI claimants had little in-person interaction with employment

and job search assistance services. While UI claimants usually are required to register and search for work, they might not know or avail themselves of the services in local one-stop career centers.

When implementing this law in Indiana, we found that it assisted jobless workers return to work faster and addressed UI overpayments. The program, created by this subcommittee, worked so well, that Indiana now requires all UI claimants to visit the one-stop center four weeks after their initial filing. Other states, including Louisiana, Minnesota and Nevada, have also adopted the "in-person" requirement.

As states work through the implementation of WIOA, this should create more flexibility for state workforce agencies to create, coordinate and implement education and training programs associated with social service and ex-felon programs. Anything further that can be done at the federal level to assist states in providing increased flexibility to administratively coordinate these programs is key to successful outcomes.

For example, increasing flexibility in the TANF grant to include reemployment services would be helpful. This would allow workforce agencies to assist the underemployed and unemployed find and retain gainful employment. Ultimately, those receiving UI, TANF, and other social services are facing similar circumstances and backgrounds.

Another opportunity to increase coordination would be to review federal agency jurisdictions (framework) – which agencies oversee which programs – and determine whether that structure and oversight arrangement makes the most sense in terms of how those programs are grouped and operated at the state and customer levels. That type of review at the federal level could result in greatly increased ease of implementation and operation at the state level, and lower costs are every level.

Lastly, a better alignment of federal reporting metrics for social service programs and workforce programs, and creating flexibility for states to tailor programs and services to specific individual needs will help increase outcomes for those most in need.

IX. Conclusion

In summary, the States are excited about the possibilities that have been created by WIOA and realize the challenges they face in implementing this historic bill. Every state believes that educating and employing our underemployed workforce will yield economic benefits for years to come, grow the tax base and increase income levels while reducing reliance on social service programs. I hope the specific state examples given will provide you with resources on successful practices to utilize as you explore ways to better coordinate services for families in need.

Thank you for the opportunity to be with you today and for your interest in initiatives that help employ American workers, improve coordination among the various programs and help Americans achieve financial independence.



National Map of State Workforce Agency Structures





Indiana Map of Various Agency Geographic Boundaries

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NASWA State Workforce Organizational Structure

National Association of State Workforce Agencies

October 2015

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Page 21 of 28	Nevada	Department of Employment,	Training, and Rehabilitation	Department of Business and	Industry	Governor's Office of Economic	Development	Department of Education	Department of Health and Human	Services	New Hampshire	Department of Resources and	Economic Development	New Hampshire Employment	Security	Department of Labor	Department of Education	Department of Health and Human	Services	New Jersey	Department of Labor and	Workforce Development	New Jersey Economic Development	Authority	Department of Human Services
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Business Oregon/Oregon Business Development Commision									at OE eventu	D and F ally CC	iave ir ND ar ac	d OED tion by	at OED and have integrated functional supervision. It is anticipated that eventually CCWD and OED will merge into one agency, but that will require action by the Oregon State Legislature.	into into on Sta	pervision one ager te Legisla	n. It is al ncy, but ature.	nticipa that w	ited th vill req	at uire
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Page 27 of 28	Virginia	Virginia Community College System	Virginia Employment Commission	Virginia Economic Development	Partnership	Department of Education	Workers' Compensation	Commission	Department of Rehabilitation	Services	Department of Social Services	Washington	State Employment Security Department	Department of Commerce	Denartment of Labor and Industries	State Board for Community and	Technical Colleges	Department of Social and Health	Services

National Association of State Workforce Agencies

VOIM Page 28 of 28	West Virginia	Workforce West Virginia	Department of Commerce	Department of Education	Department of Health and Human	Resources	Wisconsin	Department of Workforce	Development X	Wisconsin Economic Development	Corporation	Technical College System Board	Department of Chilldren and Families	Wyoming	Department of Workforce Services X	Wyoming Business Council	Wyoming Community College	Commission	Department of Family Services	
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October 2015