

**Retooling Washington's Workforce
Business Outreach and Job Referrals Work Plan
Updated July 2011**

Purpose: The purpose of this initiative is to help more unemployed Washingtonians become employed and more businesses to increase hiring by improving the ways workforce development and related programs reach out to employers and connect employers who have job openings with job seekers who meet the needs of the employers. Given the severity of the recent recession and the slow rebound in the job market, it is imperative that the state and local areas do everything we can to help businesses grow jobs and the unemployed become employed.

Summary: This initiative will build on recent efforts to coordinate and improve WorkSource business outreach and job referrals by: 1) Expanding coordination to include more state and local partners; 2) Increased sharing and use of best practices; and 3) Applying new techniques to match employer skill needs and job seeker skills.

Retooling Washington's Workforce Business Outreach and Job Referral Workplan

In order to build upon the efforts already underway, the Workforce Development System will take the action steps below.

1. Form a state level workgroup for coordinating this initiative to improve Business Outreach and Job Referrals. The state workgroup will include representatives of state and local partners and will be responsible for interagency coordination, sharing best practices, developing a comprehensive list of state resources that are useful for business outreach, and tracking performance of this initiative. The focus of the committee will be on workforce and related economic development programs and services, but the initiative will also provide for access and referrals to other government programs that serve business.

The Workforce Board will convene the workgroup. The membership of the workgroup will consist of senior staff from the participating programs as well as representatives of business and labor. The committee will build on the Board's current Interagency Committee and include representatives of: the Employment and Career Development Division (ECDD) of the Employment Security Department, the WorkSource Standards and Integration Division (WSID) of the Employment Security Department, the Washington Workforce Association (WWA), the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) of the Department of Social and Health Services, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), the Department of Commerce, the Department of Labor and Industries, the Association of Washington Business (AWB), the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC), and the Washington Economic Development Association (WEDA).

State Action Steps

Who	What	When
1.1 Workforce Board	Convene State Workgroup	December
1.2 Workgroup	Reach agreement on operation and specific functions of the Workgroup	December
1.3 Workgroup	Collect baseline data on business outreach integration	January - March
1.4 Workgroup	Identify performance measures for this initiative.	May - June
1.5 Workgroup	Compile and disseminate information on best practices in business outreach	May- October
1.6 Workgroup	Compile and disseminate information on available business service resources. The Workforce Board will post on the retooling website.	May - October

2. Workforce Development Councils (WDCs) will expand their WorkSource partnerships for business services. The WDCs are in the process of implementing the new WSID policy on coordinated business services. This new initiative will build on that process by expanding the partners involved. The exact membership of the local teams will be determined locally, but examples of additional partners (if not already present) include local representatives of economic development councils, chambers of commerce, community and technical colleges, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Department of Commerce, and local government. As with the state workgroup, the local teams will focus on workforce and related economic development programs and services, but the teams will also provide for access and referrals to other government programs that serve business.

The local teams will develop and implement coordinated local business outreach and job referral plans. The plans will:

- Assess needs for improving business outreach.
- Define roles, responsibilities, and primary deliverables of each partner providing business outreach and job referral services.
- Target industry sectors important to the area and employers with occupations in demand.
- Indicate if there is targeting of certain types of job seekers such as individuals who have exhausted unemployment insurance benefits.

- Identify action steps to increase and improve business outreach. For example, action steps may include, among other steps:
 - Allocating more staff and other resources to business outreach.
 - Creating common tool kits including social networking and other new web-based technologies. (Note: the WorkSource use of new information technologies is subject to the approval of the WorkSource Information Technology Advisory Board (WITAB),)
 - Assigning business account executives to manage outreach to particular employers, including following up with employers after services are provided in order to assess satisfaction and any additional needs.
- Identify how business outreach staff will share with other programs relevant and appropriate information obtained from employers.
- Provide for reporting performance on this initiative.

Local Action Steps

Who	What	When
2.1 WDCs	Convene expanded local teams.	January - Ongoing
2.2 Local Team	Reach agreement on operation and specific functions of the team.	January - March
2.3 Local Team	Assess or reconfirm local business outreach improvement needs.	Annually
2.4 Local Team	Define or reconfirm roles, responsibilities, and primary deliverables of each partner providing business outreach and job referral services.	Annually
2.5 Local Team	Identify or reconfirm targeted industries/ businesses.	Annually
2.6 Local Team	Identify action steps to increase and improve business outreach	Annually
2.7 Local Team	Share progress on this initiative.	June and October

3. The Employment and Career Development Division (ECDD) of the Employment Security Department will lead certain action steps to improve job referrals. ECDD continually strives to provide the best possible job referrals to employers who are hiring. A quality referral means the candidate has the specific skills, abilities, experience, and education

sought by the employer. In order to accomplish this, staff must use the best possible tools to identify employer needs and job seekers' attributes; staff must take advantage of the best possible features of electronic labor exchanges; and staff must be well trained. Finally, local areas must institute processes that support the goal of quality referrals, including good communication between staff who write job orders and staff who make referrals. In order to continuously improve job referrals, ECDD will:

- Work with other divisions of Employment Security and the WDCs to improve the matching of job seekers with employers by identifying, recommending, and improving tools to better identify job openings, understand employer skill needs, and match employer skill needs with job seeker skills.
- Build on the current business services training of WorkSource staff by offering training to the staff of other partner programs.
- Work with local areas to ensure that processes are in place to support quality job referrals, including, but not limited to:
 - Providing good communication between staff who write job orders and staff who make referrals.
 - Improving the follow through of job seekers who are referred to employers.
 - Recognizing that sometimes job seekers must instead be referred to training or other services in order to become a good fit for job openings.
 - Training staff on how to serve clients who are experiencing emotional stress.
- Convene a Quality Jobs Referral committee that will make additional recommendations for improving the quality of job referrals.

ECDD Action Steps

Who	What	When
3.1 ECDD	ECDD will work with partners to identify, recommend and improve tools for matching job seekers and employers.	Ongoing
3.2 ECDD	Offer business outreach training to staff of other partner programs.	January - Ongoing
3.3 ECDD	Work with local areas to identify and implement processes to support quality job referrals.	May - Ongoing
3.4 ECDD	Convene the Quality Jobs Referral Workgroup to identify additional recommendations	May - July
3.5 ECDD	Share progress on initiative.	Ongoing

