



**Olympic**  
Workforce Development Council

**Pacific Mountain**  
Workforce Development Council

**Northwest**  
Workforce Development Council

**Snohomish County**  
Workforce Development Council

**Seattle-King County**  
Workforce Development Council

**Tacoma-Pierce County**  
Workforce Development Council

**Southwest Washington**  
Workforce Development Council

**North Central Washington**  
Workforce Development Council

**South Central Washington**  
Workforce Development Council

**Eastern Washington Partnership**  
Workforce Development Council

**Benton-Franklin**  
Workforce Development Council

**Spokane Area**  
Workforce Development Council

December 7, 2009

Commissioner Karen Lee  
Employment Security Department

Charlie Earl, Executive Director  
State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

Eleni Papadakis, Executive Director  
Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

Dear System Partners,

Thank you for inviting our input on the draft Governor's Workforce Development System Review. We are disappointed that the problems and solutions almost exclusively focused on the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs. We see the system as much larger. Further, we believe the Review would benefit from a stronger focus on strengthening Washington's economic recovery in the long-term and helping more people find employment or enter high-demand training in the short term.

Strategies that should be included or given a much higher priority include:

1. Creating more capacity at the Community and Technical Colleges (CTCs) in high-demand courses by building upon the successful experience of SB 5809. Workforce Development Councils (WDCs) and CTCs have now implemented to full capacity committing over \$20 million to this purpose.
2. Using WorkSource Centers more consistently as recruiting and retention tools for CTCs and apprenticeship programs.
3. Creating more internship opportunities for high school students to gain experience in local high-demand careers, building off the successful implementation of the ARRA summer youth employment program by local WDCs.

The Washington Workforce Association is the statewide association of local Workforce Development Councils.

Workforce Development Councils represent local business, labor, education, employment and training, and government leaders working together to address local skills shortages, strengthen business competitiveness, and create secure careers for local residents.

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Strategies (continued):

4. Encouraging WDCs and CTCs to work together at the local level to create “one stop shopping” for financial aid so individuals can access all of the federal and state funding streams for tuition assistance in a coordinated manner.
5. Creating a stronger emphasis on identifying and filling the needs of targeted local industries building on the experience of the WDCs’ Industry Skills Panels and the CTCs’ Centers of Excellence.
6. Driving all possible funding into customer service by postponing state hiring of middle management staff and postponing state implementation of computer upgrades until the unemployment crisis is over.
7. Encouraging WDCs and CTCs to work together at the local level to create “one stop shopping” for financial aid so individuals can access all of the federal and state funding streams for tuition assistance in a coordinated manner.
8. Creating a stronger emphasis on identifying and filling the needs of targeted local industries building on the experience of the WDCs’ Industry Skills Panels and the CTCs’ Centers of Excellence.
9. Driving all possible funding into customer service by postponing state hiring of middle management staff and postponing state implementation of computer upgrades until the unemployment crisis is over.

WDCs have successfully managed an incredible 65% increase in customer caseload at WorkSource Centers, and a WIA caseload increase of over 100%, while hiring almost no new management staff and directing almost all new resources toward front-line customer service. The Review should identify ways that the state can mirror this commitment to putting the customers first.

The Review discusses accountability but does so in a manner that does not match the best practices in the field. Accountability for *results* is the industry standard in the workforce system and in the private sector. The Review proposes accountability for process; that is, the state would tell local implementers exactly how to carry out their jobs and hold them accountable for achieving process-oriented goals, as well as outcome-driven goals. This seems to be contrary to common sense and industry experience. The state should hold the local WDCs accountable for achieving specific and measurable outcomes. The local WDCs should be responsible for designing the local strategies to make it happen. The CTCs often sum this up as, “Tell us the ‘what,’ not the ‘how.’” This is a model we subscribe to as well, and Solution 3.2 of the Review’s draft language should be substantially altered to reflect this better way of obtaining accountability.

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The Review discusses the federal reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act in a positive and helpful manner. Thank you for providing such clear and helpful information. We look forward to jointly supporting the three WIA amendments suggested.

Finally, the Review seems to be focused primarily on shifting new authorities to the Employment Security Department (ESD) and defining how the WorkSource Centers are managed. In fact, the problems and solutions are remarkably similar to new roles and responsibilities the ESD proposed to the State Workforce Board last June. So six months of public input have produced no change to the Department's recommended shift of authority to itself.

Solutions 3.3 and 3.4 should be omitted from the final report and the state operational policy role of the report should be substantially revised. If they are included, they should be changed to reflect Section 121 of WIA. In many instances, ESD is a local partner and service provider in the WorkSource system whose programs must be highly responsive to the needs and demands identified by local business and labor leaders.

Business executives and labor leaders are appointed by local elected officials to serve on Workforce Development Councils. One of their key responsibilities is oversight and management of the WorkSource system. The draft version of the review would require them to change their local oversight of the WorkSource system if it does not suit one of the service provider agencies, namely, the Employment Security Department. We would support changing these aspects of the Review before it becomes a final recommendation to the Governor.

Clarification of roles is indeed desirable and reaffirming the state's commitment to the roles defined in Section 121 of the federal Workforce Investment Act would be a step in the right direction. These roles were recently affirmed by the state via the Washington Workforce Compact, signed by all members of the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, including the Employment Security Department. This commitment should remain in place and be a cornerstone of the final Review document.

The Review's focus on agency roles may be helpful, if amended, but our main focus should remain on these simple goals:

- helping people find jobs during this economic crisis,
- helping those who cannot find jobs enter high-impact training programs, and
- providing our business customers with the best workforce in the world by meeting their industry-specific needs.

The six recommendations at the beginning of this letter, coupled with a strong focus on accountability for actual outcomes, would be a good start toward achieving these critically important goals.

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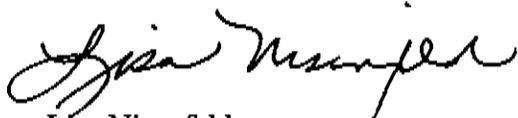
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Thank you very much for your consideration. We have attached a more detailed analysis of the "Challenges" and "Responses" for your review. We look forward to a significantly improved final version of the Governor's Workforce Review.

Sincerely,



Lisa Nisenfeld  
Chair, Washington Workforce Association

Cc: Marty Brown, Chair, WTEC

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