

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRATEGIC CHANGES TO SPOKANE'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DELIVERY SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

In December 2006, the Spokane Workforce Development Council (WDC) met to discuss their plans and strategies for the upcoming two years.

This paper services as documentation of that meeting and the resulting decisions that were made during the in-depth discussion of the board members.

OVERVIEW

Workforce development is all about providing employers with qualified job candidates.

This means preparing the right workers at the right time. Ensuring they have the right knowledge, the right skills, and the right aptitude to fill the jobs of today as well as the jobs of tomorrow.

It's a threefold issue that includes: education, training, and employment.

And, as we have transitioned into the 21st Century, the issue of workforce development has grown even more complex. Spokane is now not only competing with neighboring communities and states for jobs and workers, it is now challenged in a global marketplace, competing with nations from around the world.

To survive in this new global environment, Spokane must move its workforce agenda from one of social and employment rehabilitation to one that provides a direct economic benefit to both employers and workers.

Education and training programs must be directly linked to the local area's employment initiatives so that they actively and accurately provide the pipeline of qualified workers that are required to attract and keep Spokane businesses.

SPOKANE'S PUBLIC WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FUNDING STREAMS

On an annual basis Spokane has available approximately \$4 million dollars for employment and training related activities from the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). As shown below, these moneys are found across a number of titles.

WIA Adult	\$1.1 million
WIA Dislocated Worker	\$1.5 million
WIA Youth	\$1.3 million

Although each of these sources comes with its own individual rules and regulations, they all have the common theme of assisting and providing Spokane businesses with the skilled workers they need today as well as those they will require in the future.

Therefore, so that Spokane can successfully compete in today's global marketplace, it must develop and implement an integrated workforce strategy that takes into account Spokane's needs as a whole, without regard to individual programs or funding sources. And, it must clearly identify its workforce goals and the specific objectives required to achieve the desired outcomes.

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

As indicated, Spokane clearly needs to develop and implement an integrated workforce vision that directly links education and training to employment opportunities so that the local area is well-positioned to compete in today's global marketplace.

At a minimum this vision should include the following key elements:

1. Single Point of Contact
2. Co-Location
3. Youth Zone
4. Business Driven
5. Client Development
6. Strategic Funding

Single Point of Contact

At this time, the Spokane WDC has not fully optimized the marketing of its services to potential job seeker and business customers. As outlined in the area's December 2004 Survey and System Report:

While for the One Stop center, WorkSource is the "branding" for the location and all those who work there, each of the Affiliates maintain their own identity as the major Brand and include WorkSource on their business cards and materials and show themselves as "An Affiliate of..." which is like a FTD Flowers branding.

As a result, the One Stop is not viewed by its customers, both business and job seekers, as the "go-to" place for workforce activities for the area.

Action: The One Stop will serve as the single point of contact for workforce development activities for the Spokane area. To do so, the One Stop will be marketed as "*the*" place for businesses and job seekers to go for employment and training information and services. This change will enable job seekers to better connect with a variety of service providers, and, at the same time, will allow businesses to access a greater pool of qualified job candidates.

Co-Location

The current One Stop has minimal co-location of workforce service providers. Instead, many partners and WIA-funded entities maintain separate, stand-alone facilities rather than providing services at the One Stop location.

As a result, job seekers and businesses may be perplexed by what is perceived as a confusing maze of competing programs. At the same time, the One Stop system itself is confronted with a duplication of efforts and increased administrative costs.

Action: All WIA funded services will be provided at the One Stop location. Services at individual partner locations will no longer be funded by WIA moneys. This change will allow the WDC to increase the amount of dollars that are invested in client services such as training activities and supportive services.

To further support this action, the WDC will immediately create a Site Selection Committee to pursue the possibility of a new One Stop location (or locations) for services beginning in the Program Year 2008 timeframe.

Youth Zone

Currently, the Spokane WDC Stop does not provide specific employment and training services targeted to youth aged 14-21 at its One Stop locations. Instead, youth programs are operated primarily out of the funded-partners' locations. Therefore, the youth may not be able to fully comprehend how the One Stop can assist them with employment and training needs once they have completed their education.

Action: The One Stop will incorporate a Youth Zone to promote workforce development activities to individuals aged 14-21. This change will enable the emerging workforce to access services in an environment that is specifically designed to meet their unique needs and tastes. And, at the same time, it will allow them to preview the employment and training services that are available to them throughout their careers.

Business Driven

During the past few years, the local area has not really focused on business as a customer in the One Stop. As a result, services have been provided in a social service, rather than in a business-focused method. However, the Spokane WDC understands that to have a truly successful workforce system, business must be served as the customer while the job seeker is treated as the product to be marketed.

A workforce system that caters to employers first greatly improves the area's ability to attract new business opportunities, encourages current business growth, and helps ensure long-term business retention. And, at the same time, the business-first strategy significantly improves prospects for current and emerging workers by identifying occupational training needs, increasing job opportunities, and establishing viable career paths.

Action: The WDC will provide funding for a Business Services Unit. This unit's primary purpose will be to meet with existing and new business customers to determine their current and emerging workforce needs. This change will allow the workforce delivery system to become more demand-driven, resulting in better outcomes for both employers and job seekers.

Client Development

The WDC understands that in order to provide the best qualified job candidates for its business customers, it needs to optimize its investments in its job seeker clients. By providing such investments, it will help ensure that its clients have the necessary skills and services required to attain and retain employment.

Action: WDC-funded service providers must spend a minimum of 40% of WIA funds on client services. This change will allow more WIA funds to be invested in much-needed job seeker services such as on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, customized training, internships, work experience, as well as supportive services such as transportation and child care assistance.

Strategic Funding

Historically, the WDC has not closely reviewed the alternative funding sources utilized by its service providers. Because of it has not requested such information from potential providers, the board may have missed opportunities to strategically improve its investments.

Action: The Spokane WDC will consider in-kind contributions from non-WIA funding sources when making programmatic funding decisions. When determining overall funding investments, the WDC will recognize how potential service providers are successfully using alternative funding sources to compliment WIA activities. This change will enable to the board to better invest limited dollars in the community.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, to ensure that Spokane can successfully compete in today's global marketplace, it must develop and implement an integrated workforce strategy that takes into account Spokane's needs as a whole, without regard to individual programs or funding sources.

This system understands that successful workforce development is based on a three-pronged, interlinked approach between education, training, and employment activities. Each of these elements must be strategically aligned and intertwined with the others to ensure the best possible results for Spokane's workforce future.

As stated earlier, Spokane's workforce system must:

- ◇ **Be the single point of contact for workforce activities for the local area**
- ◇ **Co-locate all workforce-related services at the One Stop**
- ◇ **Develop a Youth Zone to assist the emerging workforce**
- ◇ **Implement a Business Services Unit to meet the needs of employers**
- ◇ **Emphasize training and supportive services to job seekers**
- ◇ **Fund workforce programs in a strategic manner**

To successfully achieve this structure, the board must, at a minimum, take the following steps:

1. Implement a comprehensive outreach plan to businesses and job seekers to increase brand awareness and knowledge of the system.
2. Mandate that all WIA-funded services be provided at the One Stop.
3. Encourage all employment and training related programs not funded by WIA to have a presence at the One Stop.
4. Investigate new or additional One Stop locations for future growth opportunities.
5. Designate an area within the One Stop for Youth Zone activities.
6. Develop the specific services to be provided within the Youth Zone.
7. Create an RFP for a Business Services Unit that outlines the specific employer-related services to be provided through the One Stop.
8. Mandate a 40% minimum for client-related services for WIA-funded programs.
9. Consider alternative funding sources when making strategic investments in workforce programs.