

## Coordinating Postsecondary Education and the Public Workforce System in Workforce Planning

*In July 2014, President Obama signed into law the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), a major restructuring and modernization of U.S. workforce development programs originally created through the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), which had been awaiting reauthorization for more than a decade. This brief provides an overview of key components of WIOA that are most relevant for state postsecondary education planners and leaders as they address issues of educational attainment and workforce skill needs, particularly among lower-income or less-skilled segments of their state. Among the legislation's most notable features are the facets that pave the way for states to make greater use of cross-system partnerships, career pathway models, performance measurement and data-driven improvement, and other mechanisms for bringing their workforce training and higher education agendas into better alignment. Much of this activity will play out at the local level, but state higher education leaders can be instrumental in facilitating the engagement of their institutions with these partnerships at both the state and local levels. Additionally, community colleges in particular will want to pursue a broader dialogue with public workforce agencies because changes in WIOA make postsecondary training a more immediate possibility for workforce customers than was previously the case. This brief presents specific opportunities for forging stronger links between the public workforce and postsecondary education systems and examples of states that are making progress on that front.*

### WIOA Programs and Funding

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act legislation ("WIOA", P.L. 113-128) synthesized many existing federal job training programs, established new ways of evaluating program effectiveness, mandated the creation of more-unified state and local plans for workforce development, and authorized appropriations through 2020. WIOA provides an expansive mandate for the public workforce system, encompassing several program streams that address the differing levels of assistance jobseekers might need, and the diverse labor markets, states, workers, industries, and businesses that the system is supposed to serve. Table 1 summarizes the WIOA legislation and its primary workforce programs, funding authorization levels, and the number of individuals served. (This brief does not discuss in detail other functions of the public workforce system, such as services to employers and labor market information.)

The vast majority of individuals who use the public workforce system do so by accessing relatively low-touch or self-service activities, such as job-search and job-matching services through state and local websites and **American Job Centers**, the physical sites defined in the federal legislation and managed by states and

local areas, which are the tangible, public face of the public workforce system.

Two components of the system – the **WIOA Adult** and **WIOA Dislocated Worker** programs – provide higher levels of service to those struggling in the labor market (such as the recently unemployed, the long-term unemployed, and workers who are significantly underemployed or lacking basic skills). These higher-service programs serve only a small portion of all workforce system customers. But they have the most potential for connecting more closely to mainstream postsecondary systems.

Two other segments of WIOA also provide more-intensive services, but are focused on youth or adults who are further from a path to formal programs of study at postsecondary institutions. **WIOA Youth** serves low-income, in-school youth ages 14-21 and out-of-school youth ages 16-24, preparing them for employment and/or postsecondary education through academic and occupational learning. **WIOA Adult Education and Literacy** is generally administered as adult education and English as a Second Language or similar programming.

Funding for these various WIOA programs is distributed by formula from the federal government to states and then to local areas, in proportion to unemployment levels and density of low-income individuals. In addition to base funding, there have been discretionary and competitive grants such as the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT), Workforce Innovation Fund, Community-Based Job Training Grants and, more recently, Ready to Work Partnership and American Apprenticeship grants that have supported community college-workforce system partnerships across the country throughout the last decade.

But base funding for WIOA programs has steadily declined in recent years, despite the fact that the demand for services grew substantially during the Great Recession, and remains high. For example, since 2006, there has been a 16 percent decrease in support for the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, which are of particular interest in this brief. These reduced funding levels are reflected in the WIOA FY 2015-20 authorization amounts.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, with a broad mandate (but limited resources) to provide a wide range of services to any possible job seeker and to support a wide array of state and local employers, the public workforce system's capacity to

**Table 1. WIOA Legislation and Programs Outline<sup>2</sup>**

| Primary Programs & Focuses <sup>a</sup>   | Average Annual Authorizations FY 2015 to FY 2020 <sup>b</sup>   | Individuals Served <sup>c</sup>   |
|---|---|---|
| <p><b>Title I - Workforce Development Activities</b></p> <p>Title I programs are administered primarily through the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) within the U.S. Department of Labor. Includes the structure of the American Job Centers housing most of the WIOA programming, and staff-assisted job search, employment coaching and preparation, services to support employment, and training, generally targeted at the unemployed including recently dislocated (WIOA Dislocated Worker), and particularly disadvantaged un- or underemployed adults (WIOA Adult) and youth (WIOA Youth).</p> | Title I funds are distributed to the states by formula in proportion to unemployment and poverty concentration. States reserve up to 15% of their allotment for statewide activities (plus another 25% of Dislocated Worker for mass layoff activity), and distribute ~85% to local areas by formula. | Averaged 2.7 million in program years (PY) 2006 and 2007; 7.0 million from PY08 to PY12. Between 150,000 and 300,000 individuals received "training" services annually over this time period. |
| <i>WIOA Adult</i>   | \$846.01 million  | Averaged 2.3 million in PY08; 6.7 million from PY08 to PY13.  |
| <i>WIOA Dislocated Worker</i>   | \$1.35 billion  | Averaged 425,000 PY06 and PY07; 1.0 million from PY08 to PY13.  |
| <i>WIOA Youth</i> . Generally speaking, training and employment services for out-of-school or disconnected youth ages 16-24.  | \$906.03 million  | Averaged 230,000 from PY06 to PY13.   |
| <i>National programs</i> include: Job Corps; Native American and migrant/seasonal worker; Youth Build; national dislocated worker grants; and national technical assistance, research and evaluation.   | \$2.18 billion<br><br>(Job Corps \$1.86 billion)  | 60,000 to 63,000 enrollees in 2006 to 2009 (last available data).   |
| <p><b>Title II - Adult Education and Literacy</b></p> <p>Education services to assist adults in improving their skills, literacy, secondary education, and developing English language proficiency. WIOA places a new focus on career education and development, including performance measures of employment and credential attainment.</p>  | \$637.94 million  | 1.8 million in PY12.  |
| <p><b>Title III - Amendments to the Wagner-Peyser Act</b></p> <p>The universally available public employment services job search and job matching assistance through American Job Centers<sup>d</sup> and online, and employment and labor market statistics.</p>   | \$662.4 million   | Averaged 16 million to 19 million annually PY06 to PY13 (with a high of 22.5 million in PY09).  |

Sources: See endnote 3 for source information.

Notes:  
a. Title IV of WIOA is Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which defines employment-related services to individuals with disabilities; it is not detailed here since eligibility is restricted.

b. These figures do not include \$950 million in job-driven competitive grants made in FY2014, \$150 million in Sector Partnership National Emergency Grants for partnerships to serve dislocated workers, or other one-time, discretionary and competitive grants such as TAACCCT, Green Jobs, etc. States also supplement federal funding, but state general funds have drastically declined in recent years. In FY2012, states supplemented \$150 million to Employment Services and \$173 million to WIA programs. Also, WIOA training funds may be used toward apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship but registered apprenticeships are authorized separately in the National Apprenticeship Act (The Fitzgerald Act), funded at an estimated average of \$27.85 million annually in FY2012-2014 plus \$100 million of American Apprenticeship Grants in 2014.

c. Summaries of data for program years 2006 to 2013, as available. Program years (PY) run July 1 to June 30. Except for the Title III category, numbers reflect, generally speaking, individuals who received at least one staff-assisted service beyond self-service employment services.

d. American Job Centers are authorized under Title 1, and are funded by the partners who occupy and provide services there, including many of the programs listed above, plus others such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and state unemployment insurance programs.

## WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs

The WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs serve adult job seekers who need assistance to be successful in the labor market. Between them, these programs served between two and three million individuals annually in the U.S. under WIA during the years before the recession, and as many as seven million annually since the recession. The number more than doubled during the height of the recession and still reflects a tough labor market (see Table 1). While the two programs offer relatively similar services to slightly different groups of job seekers, WIOA authorizes them separately. **WIOA Adult** is available to all jobseekers, but has a focus on individuals with barriers to employment, recipients of public benefits, and those who are most deficient in basic skills; so individuals who use WIOA Adult programs may also be receiving assistance through other public programs, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), among others.<sup>4</sup> **WIOA Dislocated Worker** programming is for individuals who have been recently unemployed or received notice of layoffs, are eligible for unemployment benefits, or are displaced homemakers.<sup>5</sup> There are limits to the data available to describe WIOA customers, but a few statistics are helpful. More than half (56 percent) of WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker customers are categorized as low-income, about 20 percent are single parents and about as many receive public assistance, and almost two-thirds (61 percent) have a high school diploma or less. (On the other hand, the fact that 51 percent do have at least a high school credential, and 28 percent have some college, suggests that many WIOA customers have at least a prerequisite for postsecondary training.)<sup>6</sup>

Figure 1. Training in the Workforce System

Under WIA, workforce system customers progressed through job search services before training.

Self-serve or low-intensity staff-assisted job search services

Concentrated coaching and assistance to get employed

Training

About 5% of adult WIA customers were in postsecondary training activities, 150,000 to 300,000 per year in recent years.

Now, training is to be available at any point in the career services spectrum.

Training

Training

Training

Training

Training

Training

But amounts of postsecondary training under WIOA are unlikely to increase significantly because of funding constraints and pressure for employment.

Generally speaking, under the former WIA, customers received higher-intensity services after failing to obtain employment through lower-touch, lower-cost services, and postsecondary types of **training** came at the end of the service spectrum (Figure 1).<sup>7</sup> Between 150,000 and 300,000 individuals participated in WIA training services annually in recent years, about 13 percent of Adult and Dislocated Worker clients. WIOA clarifies that training should be available at any point in the career services spectrum, which could increase the number of individuals who access training under WIOA, although it will still be limited by the funding available. The training that WIOA supports, generally speaking, is occupational or vocational training for employment that is in demand in the local market and is designed to lead to employment or an increase in

current employment circumstances within a relatively short time, typically 12 months or less. Individuals who benefit from training might be funded through a voucher-like **Individual Training Account (ITA)** redeemable with pre-approved providers on an **eligible training provider list (ETPL)**, or through on-the-job training, training of workers for a specific employer, or training for a cohort of students through a college. These circumstances mean that possibilities for coordinating WIOA training within a state's broader training and education systems will therefore most likely be with its public community and technical colleges and private for-profit training providers in the state, which draw down WIOA Title I funds for short-term credential programs that might otherwise not be eligible for federal or state student aid due to their length or non-credit nature.

provide much beyond short-term, job-focused skills training likely will continue to be constrained under WIOA. For this reason, states need thoughtful and deliberate coordination across postsecondary education and workforce systems, so that workers who use a state's public workforce system services will have increased access to the types of longer-term and more formal training that are required for the labor market.

## How Postsecondary Education Can Connect with the Public Workforce System

While the workforce system's core functions remain focused on employment, WIOA's legislative intent was to significantly impact state policies and ultimately provide more access to postsecondary credentials than occurs with workforce and postsecondary systems working independently. The WIOA state planning requirements and common performance indicators are intended to be concrete mechanisms for states to achieve cross-system linkages and strategic planning

and investment. This section describes how and when postsecondary leaders, particularly those within community colleges and technical training institutions, can be at the table and help set the state and local workforce plans.

States must submit new strategic plans for their administration of WIOA funds and programs, and there is an expectation for increased cross-system coordination and streamlining. State leaders are to coordinate through WIOA's strategic planning process, known as the **Unified State Plan**, to intentionally weave connections across a number of state systems and funding streams and lay out strategic and operational plans for the coming four years.

State higher education planners can also strengthen their collaboration with workforce training programs through their participation on WIOA-authorized **Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs)**. The boards are envisioned to be dynamic planning and leadership bodies that not only provide planning and oversight of workforce systems and funds, but are also a hub within the public workforce system for best practices such as cross-agency coordination. WIBs exist at the state and local level to give business and education leaders and others important to the job training system a leading voice in the system. WIOA legislation specifies authority and composition of state and local WIBs. Private business is to make up the majority of membership; community colleges and other postsecondary training providers are not required members on state boards, but are on local boards. Governors ultimately appoint state WIB members, and the state WIB executives manage the boards' strategic and oversight functions, including the development of the Unified State Plan.

Beyond being the governing and oversight bodies for workforce funding and programs, WIBs are also statutorily intended to be vehicles for state and local entities to plan and increasingly achieve cross-sector coordination of the workforce, human services, and postsecondary training systems. It is through the WIB process and in the Unified State Plan itself that state higher education planners, and in particular, community and technical college system heads and presidents, can pursue their ideas for cross-system coordination and craft new ways for the public workforce system to be an ally in training lower-skilled, adult, and nontraditional students/workers.

Additional possibilities for coordination exist in WIOA's provision that states may submit a **Combined State Plan** in lieu of the Unified State Plan, and align and coordinate WIOA's six core programs with one or more additional federally funded programs

that include workforce development, such as Career and Technical Education programs funded by the Carl D. Perkins Act, TANF employment and training programs, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training, and Trade Adjustment Assistance, among others. Postsecondary leaders should therefore work closely with WIBs to get a clear understanding about their states' WIOA funding and how it is used, and what part of it is applicable for postsecondary training.

The potential of Workforce Investment Boards to serve as state planning bodies, however, depends on WIB leadership and other state policymakers taking concrete steps to make them dynamic and useful. Across the country, some state and local WIBs have realized their potential and made headway on cross-sector coordination, but many have not. Colorado, for example, passed Senate Bill 14-205 in 2014, creating a Talent Pipeline Work Group as part of the state WIB to implement state-level cross-system planning.<sup>8</sup> While there is no single "recipe" for achieving the type of strategic function and coordination that the workforce legislation envisions, national organizations such as the National Association of Workforce Boards and the National Skills Coalition have documented other state and local examples and best practices.<sup>9</sup>

It is through the state *Workforce Investment Board* and the *State Unified Plan* that state higher education planners – particularly community and technical college system heads and presidents – can solidify their ideas for cross-system coordination. There is a modest level of funding to support WIOA's visionary principles of coordination, collaboration and realignment.

WIOA requires state and local WIBs to be constituted by July 1, 2015, and to submit their Unified State Plans to the Secretary of Labor by March 3, 2016. There is a modest level of funding available in each state's WIOA allocation that could be used to support cross-system coordination, collaboration, and alignment, in the form of the **set-aside for statewide activities**. Governors may reserve a portion of their combined Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth funding allocations for statewide activities (the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2015 limited the set-aside to 10 percent of FY 2015 state allotments, but the WIOA legislation authorized up to 15 percent).<sup>10</sup> This reserve is available to governors/states for certain mandated statewide activities and, optionally, for strategic uses to address state workforce training needs.<sup>11</sup> For example, based on state allocations for 2014 and 2015 program years, the maximum

potential statewide annual set-aside could range from an estimated \$450,000 to \$1 million in eight of the Western states; for six states, it is estimated between \$1 million and \$5.8 million; in California it could be as much as \$27 million to \$40 million.<sup>12</sup> The potential maximum set-aside varies greatly by state in relation to the state's WIOA formula allocation, and some states opt to pass on all the funding to the local level.

The set-aside must be used to fulfill certain required activities such as evaluations and provision of data and information to the public, and assisting local areas with planning; the remainder may support other strategic activities. The set-aside for statewide activities may not represent a significant amount of money in some state budgets, but the funds could still be influential, for example, if they were intentionally focused on selected training programs or training institutions, or if they were used in coordination with other pots of training money in a cohesive, directed way that optimizes scale and impact.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, even these relatively small amounts of money could perhaps be more powerful in regional initiatives that span states.

At the least, the WIOA statewide activities and set-aside funds provide a possible framework for state agencies to resolve policies that stand in the way of utilizing resources across funding streams, and then to distribute policies and strategic changes to local areas through planning assistance, information, and guidance.

## Possibilities for Cross-System Coordination

WIOA reauthorization prompted new opportunity and optimism to streamline states' workforce training and education services, particularly those portions of state training and education systems that target unemployed workers and individuals with the lowest skills.

WIOA is meant to support states' efforts to weave together the various parts of their public postsecondary training and education systems toward a more comprehensive approach to workforce training and educational attainment. However, these types of realignments and coordination have to be intentionally planned and executed, since many states do not have an extensive history of effective alignment and coordination between workforce programs and public postsecondary institutions and agencies.

Instead, there is a plethora of regulatory, historical, policy, and state-specific aspects of the (public) higher education, workforce, and social service systems that impede cross-system coordination to address state workforce training and education needs. For example,

there can be disincentives to coordination due to differences in cross-program eligibility, or real or perceived differences in performance definitions and measures that may not grant multiple programs credit for positive outcomes to which they contributed.<sup>14</sup>

Despite these challenges, WIOA statutorily envisions and promotes the workforce system as a key partner in developing and implementing state- and system-wide collaborative approaches. The WIOA set-aside funds (not to mention various U.S. Department of Labor competitive grants) provide a modest level of financial resources for this type of planning, which is often labor-intensive and unfunded. The Unified State Plan and state WIB offer potential forums for bridging states' postsecondary and workforce systems. And local workforce boards and American Job Centers are where postsecondary institutions can act in local partnerships to execute the planned collaborative programming.

**Coordinate to support less-resourced students.** The best example of how the public workforce system could potentially complement the higher education system is what it offers to support lower-income individuals in postsecondary education. The workforce system bridges many public and community-based entities, which could be especially helpful for community colleges in tapping into additional resources for their working/adult students who need wraparound support services and employment assistance. WIOA directly provides for individual training accounts, group training contracts, and other assistance that could be used as tuition support for students in credential programs who might otherwise not qualify for most federal student aid due to the program length or noncredit nature of the program. Further, it links to training and support service resources available through secondary and postsecondary Perkins/CTE, adult basic education, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training (the training component for food stamp recipients), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and other public and philanthropic resources.

**Streamline across education entry points.** The public workforce system can be an important partner when **career pathways** are part of a state's workforce and educational attainment strategy. "Career pathways" is an idea that has been around for a while, with various interpretations. It is codified in WIOA broadly as the organization of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services (such as counseling) to align with labor market needs and help individuals with different needs accelerate their educational and career advancement, attain a high school equivalent or

postsecondary credential, and have a direct employer/employment focus.<sup>15</sup> A career pathway approach focuses on increasing and formalizing the entry points, transfer policies, and types of credentials available in a training and education system to accommodate the diversity of individuals seeking postsecondary education. The career pathways approach anticipates greater connections through all education levels, but is particularly relevant for less-prepared or lower-skilled workers and students. Local workforce boards have formal responsibility to develop and implement career pathways in partnership with secondary and postsecondary institutions.

**Tap into aspects of WIOA that support credentialed training and use of community colleges.** WIOA provides a fresh opportunity for states to revisit key aspects of how training through the public workforce system supports the states' training and education goals and capitalizes on existing state education resources. The changes in WIOA that can improve training opportunities are subtle and will require states to look closely at their current eligible training provider procedures.<sup>16</sup> A few important aspects include:

- Governors and state leaders have an opportunity to clarify how WIOA-eligible training providers will support their goals for postsecondary training and credential attainment (which may include better utilizing public community colleges for WIOA training), through wider latitude to specify minimum training-provider selection criteria and levels of acceptable performance, and state and local roles in the eligibility determination process.
- States and local areas may designate in-demand industries and occupations and the training or credentials that have labor market value to those occupations or industries.
- WIOA contains some expansion of contractual authority for training services that should facilitate more agreements between local boards and colleges, facilitating training of multiple individuals and other arrangements that better support the expansion of training capacity than tuition-based individual training account (ITA) vouchers.

Community colleges will have to be actively engaged to provide offerings that are suitable for workforce customers (many of whom will have academic and employment barriers) and are in-demand and industry-relevant. State workforce agencies and postsecondary leaders can collaboratively clarify their strategic intent for use of these provisions and provide training and technical assistance that help local areas and colleges with implementation.

**Other coordination opportunities for increasing educational attainment.** WIOA provides other opportunities for overlapping and coordinating the workforce system with postsecondary education. Postsecondary and workforce partners can use these relatively discrete opportunities to forge better coordination overall. For example:

- WIOA mandates that public workforce centers standardize and streamline customer-intake processes to increase access to postsecondary training services; both sectors will need to be involved in concrete ways to do this.
- WIOA permits state and local WIBs to make funding available for the expenses/fees of prior-learning assessment that will provide credit for experience, especially when it leads to a certification or credential for improving employment qualifications. To capitalize on this, state and local postsecondary agencies could shepherd the policy revisions necessary for awarding prior-learning credit and provide qualified assessment staff.<sup>17</sup>
- Working in partnership, education and workforce agencies could supplement Pell grants with WIOA training funds for Pell-eligible students and workforce customers.
- Because the public workforce system interacts with a great number of workers through its public job-search services – many of whom are adults with a high school diploma or only some college – it could be tapped to provide information and outreach about the state's programs for increasing educational attainment, adult college completion, and other efforts to improve the state's workforce.<sup>18</sup>

**Connect to workforce's business and employer expertise.** Higher education could leverage the workforce system's strong labor market focus for its own purposes of understanding and meeting businesses' workforce needs. State departments of labor and employment collect and manage labor market data and information. To the extent that state systems or community colleges, for example, seek to focus on local business and economic development needs, the workforce system provides a funded hub for conducting market research and coordinating employer relationships, and even measuring program usefulness and impact with businesses and employers.<sup>19</sup> Beyond this, WIOA emphasizes "sector partnerships," in which workforce agencies are to involve institutions of higher education or other training providers in addressing employers' hiring and training needs.

## Examples of Workforce and Postsecondary Collaboration

Here we offer a few brief examples of promising collaborations between workforce and postsecondary sectors.

**Colorado** provides a robust example of how coordination is being achieved at a state level and the role that the state workforce board can play in helping to improve coordination and planning. (Colorado has a centralized community college system, but the workforce system and centers are under local control.) In 2014, the passage of SB 205 required a number of state councils and departments to collaboratively determine occupational needs across industries and to develop relevant talent pipelines.<sup>22</sup> In 2015, Colorado legislators introduced a bipartisan package of 10 jobs bills collectively called the “Colorado Ready to Work Package.” Here is the explanation one legislator provided: “The General Assembly has a responsibility to do our part in bridging the gap between the education world and the employment world. The term workforce development encompasses policies intended to promote coordination and successful partnerships between these two worlds.” The bills included dual focus on training and education for near high-school completers and on individuals not interested in pursuing a traditional bachelor’s degree; for example, making apprenticeship, career, and technical education coursework and internship eligible for concurrent enrollment credit and reimbursement (advanced as HB15-1230); a program to bring community colleges to worksites through mobile units; and directing the state WIB to collaborate with industry (and colleges) to create more career pathways and work-based learning opportunities such as on-the-job training and apprenticeships.<sup>23</sup> Prior to these legislative initiatives, the Colorado Workforce Development Council had used its authority to dedicate a portion of the state set-aside funding for mini-grants to seed cross-system collaboration in regional and local partnerships for specific industries.

In **Oregon** in 2014, SB 1566 called for the coordination and provision of services between the State Workforce Investment Board and other state-level education advisory bodies, including the State Apprenticeship and Training Council and the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, the Oregon Education Investment Board, and the Oregon Business Development Commission, to identify areas of common interest, efficiently align resources, recommend common strategies, and support the achievement of Oregon’s 40-40-20 goal and other state goals.

These two states provide examples of broad state-level vision and planning that are somewhat mature. While the results of their efforts remain to be seen, they are important first steps to moving beyond legislative intent and toward more-focused policies and programs. Other states are only recently codifying the need to coordinate across the systems that train the state workforce.

**Idaho** and **New Mexico** have passed legislation instituting state-level coordination among education, economic development, and workforce agencies, to align education and training to the employment needs indicated by businesses and data.

Sometimes the best approach is more refined or at a more local level, rather than statewide. In **California**, coordination is identified in state plans, but it plays out at a regional level. The state workforce investment board’s plan and Project Slingshot grants seed regional cross-agency collaboration to identify and solve regional employment challenges, and the state has provided some funding for collaboration around CTE programs and career pathways.<sup>24</sup>

A number of states, including **Idaho** and **Utah**, have introduced “sector-based” policies and programs, in which training and postsecondary programs (particularly within community and technical colleges) are to be designed for selected industries or occupations important to the state or local economy, as compared to more generic applications of training and educational resources. Such approaches impel the postsecondary education and workforce sectors to work together, either by default or by specific policy declaration. **Michigan** and **Pennsylvania** have used sectoral approaches with their workforce system funds for a number of years and offer mature examples of state-level policies for using the workforce system funds in a targeted way and initiating coordination across systems, while the work itself plays out at a local level to best meet the needs of local and regional labor markets.<sup>25</sup> Well-crafted state plans can also become a springboard for seeking and using other funding, such as federal grants from the Departments of Labor and Education, or grants that support specific training partnerships.

As a corollary to other state-level work, **Colorado** and **Oregon** (along with other states) are working to integrate CTE programs into their broader career pathways system development efforts.<sup>26</sup> And another specific example of how postsecondary and workforce systems are collaborating is articulating apprenticeship programs toward technical associate’s or bachelor’s degrees, such as with **Indiana**’s Ivy Tech and in **Ohio**. In the **California** Bay Area, the nonprofit Workforce Collaborative is working with the California Department of Education to have the pre-apprentice curriculum meet the entrance requirements for the state university system.<sup>27</sup>

## **Leverage workforce's employment outcomes**

**measurement.** The workforce system has been required for years to track program effectiveness and customer outcomes. WIOA further strengthened performance monitoring by requiring common employment and wage metrics for its core employment services, and by extending employment metrics and adding credential and skills attainment measures to its training components.<sup>20</sup> By addressing issues with measurement under WIA, WIOA set the stage for states to better evaluate their workforce program effectiveness, evaluate if WIOA training is contributing to their credential attainment goals, and use data for program improvement. Such efforts at measurement should not happen in a vacuum, and state postsecondary leaders could both contribute to and leverage the momentum from WIOA performance measurement for their own efforts with program improvement and outcomes measurement.

Some of the WIOA measurement changes will necessitate closer coordination and information sharing across states' workforce and postsecondary systems. For example, WIOA's credential attainment measure will require better access to awards information from postsecondary institutions and other training providers. Meanwhile, colleges that provide WIOA-funded training will need wage data for their performance reporting. WIOA set the stage for improved access to unemployment insurance wage data, at least in aggregate.<sup>21</sup> But states may still need to address any additional restrictions on wage data sharing beyond the federal rules, or impediments from FERPA restrictions, by changing state laws, policies, or procedures, and training and technical assistance throughout their systems.

The workforce system's experience with measurement also offers useful lessons to postsecondary leaders, particularly community colleges, as higher education increasingly attempts to address questions about the market relevance of its own programs and outcomes for its students. The specific measures may not all be directly transferable to higher education, but institutions that administer WIOA, adult education, and CTE programming will be subject to some of the WIOA measures. They could serve as exemplary or pilot examples of how institutions can better use data to monitor and improve program effectiveness – at least community colleges – as the postsecondary sector responds to calls for greater accountability.

Even as the postsecondary and workforce sectors

respond to these calls for greater accountability, each should take care to ensure that data on outcomes also leads to program or policy improvement. State leaders in both sectors can use some of the momentum related to WIOA, to collaboratively use data to better serve training customers and students.

The type of strategic use that WIOA envisions, and that many recognize is needed, can be difficult to pinpoint and describe succinctly. Most examples of cross-sector coordination have occurred at the local level. But several states have begun to demonstrate how such coordination can be implemented at scale through state approaches. Some of these examples are described in the box on page 7. Naturally, efforts at coordination borrowed from existing examples will have to account for important differences in state policy and administrative or labor market environments; one would need a deeply detailed description to best understand how gaps are being bridged across agencies.

## **Conclusion**

WIOA's specific role in the training and education spectrum is relatively constrained to shorter-term, job-focused skills training, is limited in terms of funding, and is focused on unemployed workers and others who by their own efforts have been less than successful in the labor market. So by itself, WIOA can support only a relatively small number of individuals in postsecondary training, and the nature of that training is employment-focused. It is increasingly apparent, however, that such a narrow and isolated role may serve neither states nor individuals well, given the growing need in the labor market for skills and competencies typically acquired in longer-term and more formal educational settings.

Such realities present a dilemma for state policymakers and leaders in education and workforce programming, and suggest a need for thoughtful and deliberate policies to better coordinate and align the programs within their respective purviews. The enactment of WIOA provides an opportunity for states to reenvision how their public workforce systems relate to the postsecondary sector, could support and diversify training for the full range of workers and businesses, and could contribute to state educational attainment goals – particularly among lower-income or less-skilled segments of their state.

WIOA emphasizes that states' public workforce systems



should make greater use of cross-system partnerships, career pathway models, performance measurement, and other mechanisms for bringing their workforce training and higher education agendas into better alignment. Much of this activity will play out at the local level, but state higher education leaders can be instrumental in facilitating the engagement of their institutions with these partnerships at both the state and local levels. Additionally, community colleges in particular will want to pursue a broader dialogue with public workforce agencies because changes in WIOA make postsecondary training a more immediate possibility for workforce customers than was previously the case. And WIOA performance measurement presents new opportunities for both sectors to use data for program improvement.

And for the postsecondary education sector, market forces alone suggest that it could benefit from partnership opportunities such as those suggested here. But policy signals such as the Obama administration's Ready to Work initiative and free community college proposal, and developments around the Higher Education Authorization Act, also suggest that some of the national policy and sentiment reflected in WIOA could prove imminently relevant to mainstream higher education.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Topline spending levels through 2021 are set by the 2011 Budget Control Act (BCA), and the Republican-controlled Congress shows an inclination to decrease funding for training and education, (see, for example, analysis by the National Skills Coalition, "House, Senate pass budgets that would force deep cuts", March 17, 2015 at [www.nationalskillscoalition.org](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org)).

<sup>2</sup> The Council of State Governments provides a useful WIOA overview, available at <http://knowledgecenter.csg.org/kc/content/workforce-innovation-and-opportunity-act>. The National Association of State Workforce Board's *Workforce Investment Act 101 Toolkit for Elected Officials*, available at [www.nawb.org](http://www.nawb.org) is also a good summary of WIA governance and largely still relevant to WIOA.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Labor. Multiple reports and data files, including *Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Services State by State PY Performance Reports; Workforce Investment Act Performance Report Highlights, Program Years 2006-2008*, January 2010; *WIA State Annual Reports and Summaries; WIA Participants by Program PY-2006-2011; WIASRD Data Books*; available from <http://www.doleta.gov/performance/reports> and <http://www.doleta.gov/performance/charts>. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, *National Reporting System*, at <http://www.nrsweb.org/>. U.S. Department of Labor, *Registered Apprenticeship National Results*, at [www.doleta.gov/oa/data\\_statistics.cfm](http://www.doleta.gov/oa/data_statistics.cfm). Funding authorization levels from U.S. Government Printing Office, Public Law 113-128, at <http://www.gpo.gov>. Author calculations.

<sup>4</sup> WIOA 'Priority of service' provisions mandate that low-income and low-skilled adults shall have priority for WIOA Adult Employment and Training Activities. Under previous legislation, this priority would only go into effect if local areas determined that funds were limited (which was often the case), while this priority is in effect for all local areas, regardless of funding limitations, in WIOA. Veterans also receive priority of service. For more information see: Anna Cielinski and David Socolow, "'Priority of Service' Provision in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: Targeting Funding to Serve More High-Needs Adults," Center for Law and Social Policy, April 2015, at [www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org).

<sup>5</sup> The WIOA Dislocated Worker program is distinct from the unemployment insurance program, which relates to those who are eligible or receive unemployment benefits, even though individuals may utilize both of these programs. UI recipients are generally required to register with the workforce system but participation in services is not mandatory.

<sup>6</sup> There is little detailed data about the bulk of customers who only access self-service job search services. There is demographic data about WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker customers, but it doesn't distinguish between individuals who persist through or discontinue programming. 'Low-income' is defined as eligible for food stamps or receiving cash payments under a public assistance program, at or below the federal poverty level or a local equivalent for family size, or is homeless, foster youth, or disabled. Low-income individuals are disproportionately served under WIOA Title I, but public workforce also serves unemployed people who might not be low-income when they pursue services, as well as other job seekers who can benefit from workforce staff assistance.

<sup>7</sup> WIOA defines 'postsecondary' broadly as anything past a secondary credential, including industry training and certification, credit for prior learning or experience, apprenticeship and so on, along with training from a college or university.

<sup>8</sup> State of Colorado, Senate Bill 14-205, "A Bill for an Act Concerning the Talent Pipeline Working Group with the State Workforce Development Council in the Department of Labor and Employment", available at <http://www.leg.state.co.us>.

<sup>9</sup> In addition to the resources listed in the publication and endnotes, see for example, the National Skills Coalition's *State Policy and Aligned by Design* resources at [www.nationalskillscoalition.org](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org), and U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Workforce Investment Act: Innovative Collaborations between Workforce Boards and Employers Helped Meet Local Needs*, 2012, available at <http://www.gao.gov/assets/590/587809.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> WIOA specified that governors may reserve up to 15 percent of the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth funding streams (slightly less from the WIA Dislocated Worker stream, if governor reserved 25 percent for Rapid Response mass layoff assistance). But the December 16, 2014, Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015, Pub. L. 113-235, specified that the amount available for the governor for statewide workforce investment activities must not exceed 10 percent of the amount allotted to the state from each of the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth for program year 2015 appropriations. See U.S. Department of Labor, *Advisory: Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 29-14, Change 1*, May 1, 2015, at <http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/>.

<sup>11</sup> The full list of required and allowable statewide activities may be found in the "Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; Joint Rule for Unified and Combined State Plans, Performance Accountability, and the One-Stop System Joint Provisions; Notice of Proposed Rulemaking", at sections 682.200 and 682.210, respectively, 80 Federal Register 20573, at [www.federalregister.gov](http://www.federalregister.gov).

<sup>12</sup> Estimates are based on published program year 2014 and program year 2015 state WIOA allotments (see endnote 10). The estimated maximum set-aside includes the combined maximum from WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth funds, but states may opt not to set-aside the maximum or combine them. California's allotment is about 15 percent of the national total, 60 percent of the West states' total.

<sup>13</sup> Notwithstanding the flexibility of this small pot of funding, there are regulatory parameters for how these and other federal funds may (and may not) be used in coordination with each other – primary among them being that the federal funds are meant to supplement, and not supplant, non-federal resources. Private, nonprofit, and corporate funds might also be encompassed in this type of work, each with their own allowable uses.

<sup>14</sup> Center for Law and Social Policy, Comments on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, June 15, 2015, available at [www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org).

<sup>15</sup> Public Law No: 113-128, Sec. 3. Definitions. (7).

<sup>16</sup> Renée Edwards, Sara Haviland, Heather McKay, Elizabeth Nisbet, *College Completion through the Workforce System: The Role of the Eligible Training Provider List in Training Choices*, Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations, 2015, available at <http://smlr.rutgers.edu>. And, American Association of Community Colleges, *The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: A Guide for Community Colleges*, 2014, at [www.aacc.nche.edu](http://www.aacc.nche.edu).

<sup>17</sup> Beyond this, the Secretary of Labor may conduct a 'Study on Prior Learning' with other heads of federal agencies to develop guidelines for awarding postsecondary educational credit for prior learning.

<sup>18</sup> See for example Southern Regional Education Board, *7 Key Steps Proven to Enhance Degree Completion through One-Stop Career Centers*, at <http://www.theadultlearner.org/seven-key-steps>.

<sup>19</sup> See National Governors Association, *State Sector Strategies Coming of Age: Implications for State Workforce Policymakers*, January 2013, accessed from [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org). And, Lisa Soricone and Navjeet Singh, *Measuring Business Impact: Lessons Learned from Workforce Development in Massachusetts*, Commonwealth Corporation, 2011, available at <http://commcorp.org/resources/>.

<sup>20</sup> WIA performance measures were not required for all customers; WIOA requires at least basic employment measures for all customers, and it requires Title I programs and activities be independently evaluated at least once every four years and at least one multistate control group evaluation to be conducted by the end of FY 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Workforce Data Quality Campaign, Comments on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, June 2015, and Rachel Zinn, *WIOA Rules Address Performance*, Workforce Data Quality Campaign, April 7, 2015, both at <http://www.workforcedqc.org>.

<sup>22</sup> Colorado Workforce Development Council, *The Colorado Talent Pipeline Report*, presented to the Colorado State Legislature January 2, 2015, available at [www.colorado.gov/pacific/cwcdc/colorado-talent-pipeline-report](http://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cwcdc/colorado-talent-pipeline-report). Note: the figures on pages 10 and 11 of the report are particularly useful for depicting the many education and work pathways and partners in a comprehensive statewide labor and education market. See also the accompanying Workforce Relationship Chart 2014 at [www.colorado.gov/pacific/cwcdc/colorado-talent-pipeline-report](http://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cwcdc/colorado-talent-pipeline-report).

<sup>23</sup> Joey Bunch, "Colorado lawmakers seeking legislative aid for the middle class", Denver Post, March 5, 2015, at [www.denverpost.com](http://www.denverpost.com). HB15-1230 Innovative Industry Workforce Development Program at <http://www.legispeak.com/bill/2015/hb15-1230>.

<sup>24</sup> Colleene Moore, Andrea Venezia, Jodi Lewis and Bina Lefkowitz, "Organizing for Success: California's Regional Education Partnerships", Education Insights Center, March 2015 at [www.csus.edu/edinsights](http://www.csus.edu/edinsights).

<sup>25</sup> Michigan Workforce Development Agency, "Cluster Strategies" at [www.michigan.gov/wda](http://www.michigan.gov/wda). Pennsylvania Workforce Development, "Industry Partnerships", at [www.portal.state.pa.us](http://www.portal.state.pa.us).

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Department of Education Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education, "Advancing Career and Technical Education (CTE) in State and Local Career Pathways Systems" at [http://cte.ed.gov/nationalinitiatives/advancing\\_cte.cfm](http://cte.ed.gov/nationalinitiatives/advancing_cte.cfm) and "Moving Pathways Forward" at <http://lincs.ed.gov/programs/movingpathways/technical-assistance>.

<sup>27</sup> Ben Olinsky and Sarah Ayres, *Training for Success: A Policy to Expand Apprenticeships in the United States*, Center for American Progress, December 2013, at [www.americanprogress.org](http://www.americanprogress.org). OhioHigherEd, University System of Ohio at <https://www.ohiohighered.org/transfer/apprenticeship-pathways>.

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