

**Summary Notes**  
**2002 Regional Forum on WIA Reauthorization**  
**Park City, UT**  
**May 8, 2002**

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The U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration scheduled a series of public forums in March - May 2002 to hear comments on issues related to the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). The second of two Region IV forums was held on May 8, 2002 at the Prospector Square Lodging and Conference Center in Park City, Utah. A total of 112 participants attended and 12 participants made comments. Also in attendance were representatives from ETA's Regional and National Offices and staff from Technical Assistance and Training Corporation (TATC).

The Session was introduced as follows:

- **Welcome and Introductions**  
Joseph C. Juarez, ETA Regional Administrator  
U.S. Department of Labor
- **Additional Comments**  
Judy Galloway  
Department of Health and Human Services
- **Overview of Reauthorization Issues and Process**  
Mason Bishop, Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary  
U.S. Department of Labor
- **Explanation of Public Comment Process**  
Ed Trumbull, TATC Facilitator

Ed Trumbull moderated the public comment session that followed. Pre-registered speakers were given the opportunity to present their comments before the floor was opened for comments.

Twelve speakers presented oral comments, three of whom submitted written comments to supplement their presentations. The summary below consists of only the oral comments recorded during the forum. Written comments will be submitted as part of the final report to be summarized and analyzed at a later date.

The comments are categorized according to the topics in the *Discussion Guide: WIA Reauthorization issues*, followed by additional topics addressed, as follows:

- I. Business Engagement
- II. Governance/ State Flexibility
- III. Linking WIA with TANF and other Partner Programs
- IV. One-Stop Career Centers
- V. Unemployment Insurance/ Employment Service Reform and the One-Stop System

- VI. Improved Opportunities for Training
- VII. General Comments

## **I. Business Engagement**

- We are committed to strengthening the state's workforce development and job training infrastructure. We oppose any effort to privatize any portion of our delivery system and will continue to support a central role for strong labor exchange function within the Department of Workforce Services. The Department should focus on developing strong ties to those companies that provide opportunities for employment that meet employee and family needs. *Labor Representative*
- There has to be a business champion for your program. Without one, the system doesn't work well. If DOL or the state does not develop a business champion, it becomes very difficult for a local area to develop business champions. There needs to be 70% business representation on Boards so that they are always in the majority. *Local WIB Staff*
- You have to be able to ensure employers that there will be benefits in bringing participants into their organization. When you eliminate performance measures from the programs, it just doesn't work. *Representative of One-Stop Partner Organization*

## **II. Governance/ State Flexibility**

- The State should be able to apply for federal grants along with Local Boards. We'd like to see smaller Boards. Our Boards range from 45-52 members and it is difficult to organize meetings with such large numbers. *State Government Staff*
- The state has decided not to provide a lot of guidance. Therefore, Local Areas make their own programs. We'd like to keep it this way. *Local Workforce Investment Board Staff*

## **III. Linking WIA with TANF and other Partner Programs**

### **Program Definitions**

- According to the GAO testimony, one of the barriers to harmonizing the TANF and WIA system is inconsistent program definitions and reporting requirements. The TANF and the WIA systems should adopt benchmarks for success and program definitions for self-sufficiency that are, on one hand, geographic-specific and, on the other, consistent across programs and from state to state. These definitions and benchmarks should be based on the real cost of covering basic expenses, depending on family composition and location. Such a measure exists here in Utah and in 23 other states. The Self-Sufficiency Standard is calculated in each state at the county level for a variety of family compositions. It sets out long-term goals for success in the workforce. We recommend that the USDOL

support provisions in the TANF reauthorization bill that will provide a full understanding of the income an individual family will need to meet its most basic needs—food, clothing, shelter, health care, transportation, childcare, and taxes. Adopting such a standard will help policymakers in their effort to more clearly articulate expected outcomes by providing measurable objectives that go beyond work participation rates and caseload reductions and address the issue of moving families toward self-sufficiency.

*Director, Non-profit Organization*

- The definition of “families” needs to be consistent (between WIA and TANF). It would be easier to administer and use if the definition were consistent. *State Government Staff*
- Consistent definitions across program lines need to be in place. The definition of “low income” is more generous in Wyoming through the TANF program than through WIA. I suggest that we match low-income definitions of WIA to TANF. If it were consistent it would be much easier to administer and easier for front-line staff to use. *State Government Staff*

## **Funding**

- It is difficult for communities to plan for (WIA and TANF) funds when they come in at two different times. If we want to use all available funding sources, the WIA programs are forward funded while TANF is not. It is difficult for communities to plan on how to use both funding sources. I would like the state to have the flexibility to shift funding of dislocated worker funds based on the state’s needs. The Federal government is a year behind the cycle and the States are out of funds when large dislocations do occur. *State Government Staff*
- We have encountered struggles trying to get the different programs to integrate. Funding comes in small pockets earmarked for its targeted population. What it tends to create is a front-line person profiling their client for the sake of deciding which funding stream to fund them under. *State Government Staff*

## **Partnership**

- We are forcing the participants to work for so many hours that they are excluded from training. We see that there is money for training, but if you force them to go to work for 40 hours/week, they don’t have time to train. In this respect, TANF and WIA are working against each other. *State Government Staff*
- We are glad to see that TANF is not a required partner in the system. *State Government Staff*
- Unless Congress requires coordination between WIA and TANF, we do not have the influence to force this partnership. *WIB Board Member*
- Although we recognize the need for coordination between TANF and WIA programs, we know that these programs have distinct programmatic and policy goals that neither

system should subsume. We support coordination with and involvement of proven providers, our state's registered apprenticeship programs, community colleges, and other post-secondary institutions, as well as community-based organizations in delivering high-quality education and training. *Labor Representative*

- If we are going to invest in our workforce, then we need a better linkage between TANF (which is about families) and workers who are part of families. The "Work-First" push for the TANF cash assistance clients does not mesh with what employers are telling us they want in a qualified workforce. Many of our TANF clients have not completed high school. They don't even have basic literacy and math skills for entry-level jobs. We do need to invest in the workforce and in families. We need better training and WIA and TANF need additional funding. *Advocate*

#### **IV. One-Stop Career Centers**

- All parties should pay their fair share in the One-Stop centers. For example USDOL, TAA, Veterans, NAFTA, TAA are not currently paying their fair share for programs in Wyoming. They should provide adequate funding so that we can ask for full funding from our partners. *State Government Staff*

#### **V. Unemployment Insurance/ Employment Service Reform and the One-Stop System**

*No comments were made under this topic.*

#### **VI. Improved Opportunities for Training**

- The State of Utah is experiencing levels of unemployment and dislocation unprecedented in recent years. Securing the future for working families depends on having access to training, education, and then jobs that pay well and provide good benefits, and especially reasonable and affordable health care. Responding to the economic challenges facing millions of unemployed, low-wage and disadvantaged workers, and the need to retain and create decent jobs is a daunting and urgent task for our nation's workforce development system as well as responding to the dislocation of workers. *Labor Representative*
- We would like to see all youth be included rather than just those who apply based on their family's income. There are some youth in the middle-income class that would benefit from WIA services. It should be classified just like adults in the dislocated workers program. *State Government Staff*
- It is difficult for the state to address what makes productive employment. There is training going on, but there are no jobs for these trained individuals. The nature of people

is for them to not move for training or employment. *Local Workforce Investment Board Staff*

## **VII. General Comments**

### **Funding**

- We'd like to see formula funding continue as it is. *State Government Staff*
- With the dislocated worker program, we've had a 53% cut this year, and it has devastated our entire workforce system. We need supplemental funding. *State Government Staff*
- Local Boards must be trained on strategic planning for their funding. *Local Workforce Investment Board Staff*

### **Performance Measures**

- The Current WIA performance measures are difficult for front-line staff to use and administer. Because of this, they have a difficult time meeting their goals and serving their customers. *State Government Staff*
- Performance Standards are skewed and inappropriate. Performance based on customer satisfaction and continuous improvement should be the goal. *Local Workforce Investment Board Staff*
- We feel that there should be accountability on the participant's part. Service and training providers are held accountable, but not the participants. *State Government Staff*

### **Eligible Training Provider List**

- The Eligible Training Provider list needs to be eliminated, or US Department of Education should buy into the system. There currently is not enough money. *State Government Staff*
- The Eligible Training Provider list is becoming a large issue. Providers drop out because there are not enough participants. Most people do not want to relocate so therefore are not paying attention to the information that is being furnished. People are only looking at the training that is in their area. This is a burden being placed on 2-year institutions and is an issue that should be addressed. *State Government Staff*
- We have a major problem with the Eligible Training Provider list and the regulations stating that they have to follow all of the students in a training program. *Local Workforce Investment Board Staff*

## Other

- The private sector of the WIA Program is extremely good and other programs should be following their example. *Local Workforce Investment Board Staff*
- Simply exempt institutions that are approved by an accredited organization from reporting outcome measures. This would solve a large part of the eligible provider list problem. *NA*
- If the family does not cooperate in giving you the income eligibility criteria, the youth may not ever get served. We can serve these youth if we separate them from their family. *Representative of One-Stop Partner Organization*