

# OREGON

Program Year 2008-09

## Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Annual Report Narrative

*"We must invest in education and workforce training so Oregon becomes a magnet for companies that want to hire skilled workers, and workers have good jobs that fully utilize their skills and talents. Oregon needs competitive companies, productive people and innovative ideas to grow and keep stable, high-paying jobs in our state."*

- Governor Kulongoski

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## **WorkSource Oregon**

*WorkSource Oregon* (WSO) is a statewide workforce development system—a network of public and private partners that stimulate job growth by connecting businesses and workers with the resources they need to succeed.

Oregon's workforce system serves Oregon workers by helping people update their career skills, launching them toward higher wages, and referring them to jobs or educational career paths based on new technologies or innovations. Oregon businesses have a competitive edge when they have access to a highly skilled workforce.

### *WorkSource Oregon:*

- Ensures businesses have a ready supply of trained workers whose skills and talents are aligned with the expectations and needs of business and industry;
- Connects businesses with the resources they need to grow their workforce and their business;
- Provides resources to help Oregon's unemployed and underemployed connect with the employers that are right for them, find the jobs they're looking for and get trained for jobs they want;
- Aligns concurrent initiatives in the education, workforce and economic development arenas;
- Provides leadership in shaping the education programs and workforce services that benefit individuals, businesses and communities in Oregon;
- Ensures a continuum of comprehensive learning opportunities that enable youth and adults to effectively contribute to our global society;
- Broadens sustainable public access to skills, knowledge and career opportunities.
- Fosters innovation in instruction, service delivery and information collection and dissemination; and,
- Meets public stewardship and accountability expectations to federal, state, and local partners.

## **Integration**

*"Integration will enhance the use of limited and declining funding through a more efficient use of resources and an elimination of program duplication and requirements. Integration will systematically improve the coordination of Workforce Investment Act and Wagner-Peyser Act funded services to achieve improved customer outcomes and more efficient and effective customer service."*

- Compass Policy for Alignment and Integration

The state workforce development organizations and community partners have moved to a simplified, unified approach in delivering "market driven" services to job seekers and employers through the implementation of the federal Workforce Investment Act. At the same time, a collaborative approach to the delivery of

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technical assistance, training and capacity building to support state workforce development partners also is occurring among state agencies

Oregon has taken the first steps to implement an *integrated service delivery system*, involving the design of a new service delivery model and the creation of a data-sharing infrastructure. These efforts at system and service integration affects the major workforce partners [Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs), Oregon Employment Department (OED), Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD)] by:

- Moving beyond partnership to multi-disciplinary service integration
- Establishing integration minimums that are expected in all local areas
- Requiring that LWIBs convene the partners and are accountable for the development of an integrated service delivery system with OED and the LWIB

*Integration Minimums:* Multi-disciplinary service integration for all customers who come to a WorkSource Oregon physical location will:

- Increase the quality of services being delivered through OED and CCWD
- Focus on skill and talent development of job seekers as well as current workers
- Increase the wages, retention and advancement of Oregonians
- Positively impact the economic well being of the State

This is a substantial endeavor, affecting state and local policies and procedures, service delivery, staff training, resource management and sharing, cross-agency alignments, and multiple, often shifting, priorities based on federal and state requirements and customer and staff needs.

### **Progress and Innovation**

On October 6, 2008, Oregon implemented the first stage of an electronic system designed to standardize customer enrollment and eligibility determination for multiple program funding streams [Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I-B Adult, Dislocated Worker, Wagner-Peyser (as amended by WIA Title III), and Trade Act]. One of the goals of this common intake process is to create a “common customer pool” of WIA/Wagner-Peyser (W-P) participants. This front-end application became the foundation of the WorkSource Oregon Registrant Program (WORP), the name given to the customer- and staff- accessed portions of the electronic registration process. WORP now collects and records statewide customer information and data, and staff transactions, in a single application accessible by all authorized WorkSource Oregon staff.

In turn, the WORP became part of the WorkSource Oregon Management Information System (WOMIS), a multi-application, statewide customer data and information system designed to move the current WorkSource Oregon functions [Common Intake, WORP, iMatchSkills (labor exchange), Trade Act, WIA-MIS, and associated supporting links] to an integrated and consolidated system.

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The goals of WOMIS:

- Provide an integrated system to support all WSO programs
- Provide a single entry point for all WSO staff using a common authentication method
- Provide a consolidated data repository to support all WOMIS system applications
- Eliminate redundant data structures
- Consolidate and standardize services
- Allow staff to view services provided to customers from multiple programs: Wagner-Peyser, WIA Title I-B, Trade Act, etc.
- Consolidate and standardize administrative functions including location management, vendor management, staff management, and program management
- Build a flexible, modular application infrastructure that can be readily adapted to meet future business changes
- Consolidate and upgrade operational and management reporting
- Build a robust data warehouse to provide performance reporting and decision support

Challenges Oregon has faced, and is continuing to address, include:

- Migrating and reconciling customer data from multiple, independent, Local Workforce Investment Area (LWIA) Management Information Systems (MIS)
- LWIA and State-level requests for enhancements and improved functionality
- Consistent, accurate reporting capabilities
- Physical relocation of hardware – including joint- and co-management of staff from several state agencies and partner organizations
- Concurrent implementation of a new statewide Initial Skills Review assessment software application
- Development of interagency agreements for governance, systems administration, operational support, enhancement, and change control

Implementing this new system requires ongoing analysis and research, extensive Information Technology (IT) programming and coding, statewide hardware and software changes, and continuing fine-tuning, enhancements, and troubleshooting. Oregon expects that as we transition to this new model, factors that determine performance will move closer to common numerators and denominators between WIA and W-P services, resulting in a continued convergence of performance results.

### **Performance**

CCWD has a long history of working with and supporting local efforts to meet and exceed state, federal or local performance measures. Performance measures are an integral part of CCWD's work, and are incorporated into the services provided through community colleges, the federal Workforce Investment Act

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(WIA) Title IB and Title II programs, and Carl Perkins Vocational and Technical Education programs.

Federal performance measures include the US Office of Management and Budget common measures that now affect WIA Title IB, WIA Title II, and Carl D. Perkins programs.

### **State Evaluation**

Oregon continues to evaluate the impacts of the workforce system. Initiatives include a renewed interest in further developing Oregon's long-standing system wide performance measurement system and data warehousing, continued emphasis on WIA performance analysis and improvement, increased efforts to implement the WIA common measures, and an initiative by the Oregon Workforce Investment Board to track the implementation of its new strategic plan.

The state has undertaken or plans to undertake the following efforts in the area of program evaluation:

- Data from our system wide performance measures continues to be available for the employment related indicators, basic skills attainment, and TANF caseload management. Our experience in using this information for the narrative portion of the Annual Report has been positive and continues for the current report. This system wide performance data is available at [www.prism.state.or.us](http://www.prism.state.or.us). The site includes analysis of the data. Current discussions include changing some of the definitions of the indicators to more closely reflect Federal measures.
- Oregon is increasing the emphasis on developing the "next generation" data system. Efforts include connecting with a planned data warehouse for Oregon's K-20 education system, a desire for more flexible reporting on system wide data, and warehousing data for the reporting of common measures for federal compliance.
- State staff review local area and statewide performance quarterly. Local areas are contacted about various aspects of their operations and their effect on performance. In-depth analysis of local performance includes the continued use of Performance Matters, a performance management on-line service, which has greatly improved efforts to analyze WIA IB performance.
- Annual quality assurance reviews address multiple aspects of program compliance and program improvement.
- Oregon's Labor Market Information system continues to be responsive to state and local Workforce Investment Board needs, and supplies information and analysis to assist with evaluation initiatives. Recent studies have included job and industry growth analysis, industry cluster analysis, studies of the occupational needs and growth of various industries and industry groupings, and

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local/regional profiles, all of which assist in the evaluation of the effectiveness of workforce programs in the state.

### **Cost of workforce investment activities relative to the effect of the activities on the performance of participants**

The significant economic downturn in Oregon and efforts to establish a common customer pool for all WorkSource Oregon customers (WIA and W-P), combined with lengthy lags in data (such as retained employment or earnings increase) makes calculating some specific costs difficult at this point. In general, the demand for resources by adults, dislocated workers, and youth far exceed the available resources for helping people identify and improve their skills, and obtain the best possible job.

At the local level, there may not yet be a clear enough connection between accounting data and individual participant records to be able to track some cost measures for particular service or set of services. Oregon plans to address these cost issues as we move forward.

### **Uniform Reporting**

Progress is being made towards a single, statewide data Management Information System (MIS). There is an on-going state/ local users' group that continues to monitor the MIS elements for consistency and needed changes. Oregon has reduced the number of regional MIS system from five to two different systems. At the state level, MIS elements are being reported uniformly, and Oregon's goal is standardization of reporting elements at the local level as well.

### **Information on participants in the workforce investment system**

Participant information for 2008-09 is being provided in the WIA Title IB Annual Report Form (ETA 9091) also due Oct. 1, 2009.

### **Waivers**

Below are the waivers for which Oregon has received approval, with information on how the waivers have changed the activities of the state and local areas, and how activities carried out under the waivers have directly or indirectly affected state and local area performance outcomes, where known.

#### ***Waiver of the period of subsequent eligibility for eligible training providers.***

Oregon continues to struggle with the applicability of the "all students" data we are able to access for the performance measures for subsequent eligibility. Requiring "all students" data reporting in the WIA resulted in training providers, particularly community colleges, to refrain from putting training programs on the list. Oregon expects WIA reauthorization to provide states with more flexibility to develop systems of more utility to states' individual situations.

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Without this waiver, Oregon would not be able to maintain a robust Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL). Currently, there are 184 providers and 943 training programs on the list. It is worth noting that a majority of the training programs on the list are offered by community colleges, often the only training provider in most regions of a largely rural state. These programs would not be on the ETPL if not for the waiver.

*Waiver allowing for the use of state set aside rapid response funds for the purposes allowed for statewide activities funds.*

This waiver has allowed for an increase in the funds available for the Employer Workforce Training Fund, Oregon's incumbent worker training program and demand-side capacity building program. The waiver increases the amount available for the direct training of incumbent workers and simplifies the program for participating employers. A total of 65 percent of the funds goes to local areas for incumbent worker training. While the use of Rapid Response funds for this program has been reduced due to the need for Rapid Response activities in the down economy, the EWTF continues to train incumbent workers in demand occupations in every part of the state. To date, since the implementation of the waiver, Oregon has trained 29,342 incumbent workers in 679 projects statewide.

*Waiver to allow the Oregon workforce system to forego reporting of the WIA required performance measures and adopt and report the "Common Measures" for federal job training and employment programs.*

The simplified performance management and reporting across systems allowed by this waiver has been instrumental in developing a fully integrated workforce system, since the service delivery system now has the same outcome measures regardless of the agency and funding source. The simplification has reduced the administrative burden. The ability for the system to focus on common measures has allowed local boards to hold providers accountable to more relevant and easily understandable measures. It has also simplified the work of the line workers allowing them to serve our integrated customers more effectively.

*Waiver limiting the provision of incumbent worker training to 15 percent statewide activities funds.*

This waiver results in local boards being able to use all or a portion of formula funding for incumbent worker training, allowing greater flexibility in meeting the needs of targeted sectors and incumbent workers. It enhances the ability of local Workforce Investment Boards to improve job retention, avoid layoffs and increase the competitiveness of sectors targeted in local areas.

The state set up policy for application locally to the state to implement this waiver. To date no local areas have applied, although at least one area is interested in doing so. Oregon has advised the local area to wait for approval of

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Oregon's 2009 WIA/ Wagner-Peyser State Plan Modification, which amends the parameters of the waiver.

*Waiver of the prohibition of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for youth.*

This waiver allows ITAs for youth, giving local areas the flexibility to meet the needs of individual youth.

This waiver is relatively recent and it is too soon to quantify its effects on local performance at this time. Anecdotally, we have evidence of an increase in ITAs due to their application to the youth population. LWIBs are appreciative of the additional flexibility offered them through this waiver.

This narrative was a product of contributions from CCWD staff  
and workforce partners.

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