

**STATE OF VERMONT**  
**WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT**  
**TITLE 1-B**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**JULY 1999 – JUNE 2000**

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Vermont responded quickly to Congress' enactment of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) and decided to transition its Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs into the new arena of WIA effective July 1, 1999. That decision was supported by the fact that we had already created "One Stop Career Resource Centers" (CRCs) in Vermont under a "One Stop" grant that had been awarded to the State in 1997. Additionally, an earlier "Planning Grant" had facilitated the creation of resource centers in each of our regional sites.

**GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

In 1994 Vermont established a Human Resources Investment Council (HRIC) to oversee the development of a statewide workforce development system. By an executive order in 1999, the HRIC was reconstituted as the state's Workforce Investment Board. Consistent with Vermont's earlier JTPA designation as a "single state SDA", we have maintained single state status under WIA. In this way, the HRIC serves not only as a statewide WIB but also meets the definition of "local WIB" in Vermont.

Under the Workforce Investment Act, a regional network of state designated WIBs has been established. These WIBs serve to identify the employment and training needs of individual regions throughout the state and to promote the development of appropriate service strategies to meet those needs. Currently each regional WIB is developing a strategic plan for their respective area in the State.

It is through leadership from this strong business-led WIB that Vermont, after its first full year under WIA implementation, remains committed to an integrated network of service providers with programs and activities accessible through a statewide system of one-stop career centers. Recognizing that even in a strong economy many individuals still struggle to earn a livable wage and that due to a lack of skilled employees in the workforce, many employers still have unfilled jobs, the HRIC and the regional WIBs are well positioned and committed to addressing that skill shortage.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF ONE STOP SYSTEM**

Vermont has twelve one-stop career centers, one of which is designated as Vermont's comprehensive one-stop career resource center (CRC). During the first year of WIA, these CRCs concentrated on staff development and customer satisfaction measurement as a means of improving customer services.

Staff development efforts, using the Career Development Facilitator Curriculum (CDF) and our Career Resource Center Employee Level I Training Package have improved staff skills and enabled them to provide a higher level of service to our customers.

CDF, developed by the Career Development Training Institute at Oakland University for NOICC, has become an important part of every one-stop center. In Vermont, the staff from the Community College of VT and the Department of Employment and Training jointly facilitates the CDF program. Although not required, all case-management staff are encouraged to participate in the program. Initially, staff resisted (some even protested) CDF. Many had not been in school for years and saw CDF as a return to school that required a major time commitment over and above their normal workday. However, this resistance was quick to fade once the classes were underway and soon other case-managers were signing up for future classes. Staff who successfully complete this 120-hour program receive 6 college credits. Successful completers can then apply to the Center for Credentialing and Education for national certification. To date, approximately 140 case-managers have completed the CDF program and 44 have obtained national certification.

During the first year of WIA implementation, Vermont developed the Career Resource Center Employee-Level 1 training program in an effort to ensure that each staff person possesses the basic skills necessary to perform core duties required of any CRC employee. This package consists of eight competency areas: Labor Market Information, Team Skills, Customer Focus Skills, Technology Skills, Communication Skills, Assessment Tools, Skills Specific to the Vermont Department of Employment & Training, and Interpersonal Skills.

The package was developed as a self-paced study relying on mentors and other staff as resources when necessary. All new and promoted employees are required to participate. The employee completes an assessment and, based on the results, works with the CRC manager to develop a learning plan. A portfolio is then completed and submitted to a state level review committee. Participation in three role-playing scenarios is required of all participants to demonstrate proficiency in each of the eight defined competency areas. The process generally takes six months. To date, 15 individuals have participated and 10 have successfully completed the training.

In order to promote continuous improvement in our service delivery system, Vermont has developed a point-of-service survey that will be conducted over a two-week period every six months. Using focus groups of job seekers and employers, we initially determined what our customers felt was most important to them and measured their current level of satisfaction with our services. We then developed the questionnaires and conducted our first survey late in 1999 with the following results. Overall, employer satisfaction was rated at 78% and job seeker satisfaction was rated at 89%. These results closely parallel those obtained from our administration of the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) survey in which employer satisfaction was rated at 80% and overall participant satisfaction was rated at 90%.

Based on the point-of-service survey results, the Career Resource Centers will develop improvement plans to address problem areas. This process will be formally implemented in April of 2001.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

Vermont's 5-year plan sets forth a goal to move our system of partnerships well beyond the customary coordination of programs and services to a fully integrated network of workforce development programs and services. Through this network will come improved counseling, job search assistance, and career information, from which we hope to realize significant increases in employment earnings, retention, and skills for our workforce with net gains for both employers and employees in Vermont.

In addition to the obvious partnerships with the Departments of Education and Vocational Rehabilitation, Vermont's one-stop system recognizes other partners such as the Registered Apprenticeship Program, School-to-Work, Welfare-to-Work, TANF, Title V of the Senior Community Services, and various local

community based organizations. In total, our MOU includes fifteen agencies within the state of Vermont. Even though working relationships with these agencies were generally in place before our implementation of WIA Title 1-B, efforts to create MOU's were often complicated by our partners' lack of understanding about what their responsibilities were to be. Additionally, cost-sharing issues also complicated the process. Currently some partners are sharing the cost of CRCs. We are working with other partners to develop effective relationships that we anticipate will lead to their financial contributions in the future.

The ability of all states to develop cost sharing arrangements would be significantly enhanced by an effort to achieve full coordination across the federal agencies with a clear understanding relative to cost sharing.

## **CONSTRAINTS TO IMPLEMENTATION OF WIA REFORMS**

While the transition from JTPA to WIA has gone well, there were (and still are) obstacles to full implementation. In general, we are pleased that we were able to continue services at levels nearly equal to our last year of JTPA. During our first year under WIA we served 1380 individuals through the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth funding streams. By comparison, our PY '98 service levels under JTPA were 1507 (exclusive of the traditional Summer Youth Employment Program) for the same basic population groups.

### Changing Mindsets:

Perhaps the most noticeable constraint to implementing WIA is the difficulty many staff have experienced in shifting from JTPA to WIA. While not intended to suggest that the following issues reflect specific problems with the WIA model, this observation does acknowledge the struggle that comes with change and the individual responses of each casemanager.

### Work First:

Under WIA, staff, customers, and our partners have routinely experienced difficulty adjusting to the "work first" concept. Prior to WIA, access to training dollars was relatively easy and did not demand the same rigid assessment of training needs that is required under WIA. In spite of several statewide training sessions that we provided, before and during the first year of WIA, "work first" remains an area around which questions continue to surface. For some, "work first," means any job, without regard to potential job retention or a livable wage while others may view "work first" in terms of what constitutes "suitable work". While we regard this issue to be one of individual staff judgement, requiring an inherent level of case-management subjectivity, it remains an area of frequent confusion, which ultimately affects the delivery of services in Vermont.

### Follow-up Services and Job Retention:

The concept of follow-up services as a "post-program service" and not an "activity" has also been difficult to convey to staff, leading to questions about the intensity with which those services should be provided and the system's capacity to manage the resultant workload. There continue to be questions over what it means to provide follow-up services during the twelve months following program exit. Is it enough to inform individuals, at exit from WIA, that post-program services (financial and non-financial) are available, and then wait for them to contact us? Or, should those services be more actively promoted through regularly scheduled contacts? This issue is most noticeable when applied to the youth population, who must all be provided with follow-up services for a minimum of 12 months following exit from WIA. Typically, questions arise about those youth

who clearly do not want our continued involvement or who may have moved to another state. How do we provide mandated services to persons who may not want them?

Closely tied to the issue of follow-up services is job retention. A growing awareness of the impact follow-up services can have on job retention and the attainment of related performance measures has prompted a greater focus on follow-up. Although extended post-program services have great merit; there are persistent concerns about potential workloads and funding to support these efforts.

### Summer Employment Opportunity vis a vis Summer Youth Employment Program:

The replacement of a stand-alone Summer Youth Employment Program with the WIA program element Summer Employment Opportunity has been and is one of the most difficult aspects that we have encountered in our efforts to serve youth. While we fully agree with the intent of the ACT concerning the provision of meaningful and complete services to youth participants, we fear that too many youth are being left behind. We believe there remains ample justification for the continuation of a stand-alone Summer Employment Program to meet the needs of numerous youth who are in their most vulnerable years and who are not being served due to current WIA restrictions, whether because of the 70/30% in-school/out-of-school ratio or the need to meet negotiated youth performance measures.

### Eligible Provider List:

The creation of an eligible provider list for the first year of WIA was not a problem since providers were practically guaranteed inclusion on the list just for the asking. However, many of those same providers have chosen not to seek renewal of their status on the provider list for the next year. This problem comes from the requirement for eligible providers to provide performance data to the state. Typically, they do not collect the data on students that WIA requires and they do not have staff and systems available to collect and compile that data. Or, there may be confidentiality laws prohibiting the release of information on the students. And, for many, the financial benefits realized from being included on the eligible provider list simply do not justify the effort required for them to comply with WIA requirements. This of course creates a major issue in a small state like Vermont, as we don't have a large number of schools from which our customers can choose. In this situation, the eligible provider list requirements appear to be having the opposite effect from that intended by the WIA legislation. WIA customers' choice has in fact already become severely limited as providers self-select out of the process.

A belief in customer choice has long been practiced in Vermont and was always a primary consideration in selecting a school/program for JTPA participants. The demands that WIA puts on our training providers works against this important philosophy.

## **REPORTING SYSTEM AND DATA COLLECTION**

In Vermont we decided to modify our existing JTPA data collection and reporting system to meet the requirements of WIA. Although a new data collection system for a new program had appeal, there were compelling reasons to stay with our existing design. These included: 1) the need to maintain existent JTPA files which were being grandfathered into WIA, 2) the lack of resources to build a new system from the ground up, 3) a desire to maintain links to other programs housed within our training services data base, and 4) our desire to maintain a familiar system for existing staff. While this approach allowed for a transition to WIA with minimal

disruption to data systems, we have subsequently found it necessary to make frequent adjustments to the system to accommodate a continually growing awareness of program details and reporting requirements. As a result, we are now seriously pursuing the resources to purchase an operating system with the design and capacity to meet the demands of WIA and other DET programs.

## **FIRST YEAR ACTIVITIES**

In anticipation of WIA and during our first year of operation we provided five one and two-day statewide WIA training sessions. They included: 1) an overview and orientation to the new WIA legislation, 2) training of case-managers and counselors in adult and dislocated worker program requirements, 3) training on youth program requirements, 4) training for program eligibility determinations, and 5) training on data entry relevant to the WIA revisions in our data collection system.

## **SUCCESS STORIES**

Successes occur almost daily but may go unrecognized or simply not reported. Sometimes that which may seem so insignificant at the moment later proves to have a profound and lasting significance in a person's life. These almost invisible successes are so much the story of WIA, as they were of the Job Training Partnership Act and the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act.

The following accounts tell the stories of two successes that did not escape our attention. These are proud and happy moments for all that work to provide hope and opportunity to those who come through the WIA system. We are happy to share them.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Story as reported in a letter of thanks to the director of one of our youth programs from a father following his 17 year old son's experience

"I wanted to express my gratitude to the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps. My son Christopher, just completed his duties as a member of Roving Crew #6 under the superb leadership of [both crew leaders]. I picked him up yesterday at the Mansfield Hostel, looking very much like a homeless person covered in grime and a month's worth of filth. But this was a very different young man than the one I had dropped off on July 30<sup>th</sup>. He was brimming with self-confidence and pride in his accomplishments. It was so obvious to me that this program had offered my child a remarkable experience.

His leaders are to be commended for their superior leadership as well as mentorship. Their journal acknowledgments to my son were sensitive, supportive and encouraging. They expressed compassion over his frustrations and applauded his efforts to work through concerns. They taught him skills that he will continue to use and helped him to feel more successful and productive. Words cannot express my gratitude to these two very special leaders for helping my son these past four weeks.

Thank you for offering my son a successful summer experience and friendships he will always remember."

### 2<sup>nd</sup> story relating a success shared by WIA and Welfare-to-Work

When this success was reported, the participant had just completed his 21<sup>st</sup> week in unsubsidized employment (following the completion of On the Job Training) with a local trucking company. Here is his casemanager's story and excerpts from the employer's letter to us demonstrating the value of post-program follow-up services, and the extraordinary efforts of both this former participant and a very understanding employer.

The case-manager reports regular contact with the participant over the months since he started full-time employment. During this time he has been confronted with overwhelming personal issues which could have caused him the loss of his job. With

continued support from his casemanager and an understanding employer, he now has hope for long-term self-sustainable employment. Some of his issues included:

- Falling off truck, hurting his back, and going on workers comp for 1-½ weeks
- Missing work for pneumonia and bronchitis, several days each time
- Company vehicle incidents causing \$584 worth damage
- Court hearings for child support issues
- Unexpected custody of his 17 year old son
- Missing work to go to court with his son (driving w/o license)
- Trying to help his son out financially in-spite of his own financial instability
- Broken toe
- Recent move
- Son’s drug and alcohol problems (says his son is following the same path he did as a youth)
- Ex-wife’s fire in her apartment. Paul steps forward to help out financially.

In spite of all this, the employer feels this individual does a good job, has a good attitude, and that they are a large enough employer to accommodate him. The employer understands that people’s lives are complicated. When he had trouble with paperwork, they worked with him on it. When necessary, the employer reassigned him to tasks that would not require long distance hauls. In spite of an occasional customer complaint about him, the company stands behind him, acknowledging that all customers will not get along with all workers.

And the employer writes:

"He took a little longer in (OJT) training than I expected, but the results were very beneficial.."

"He is driving out of state now and is doing well. He still needs more experience, but that will come in time. Hopefully this has changed his life for the better. ....this program has given a person the ability to qualify for a job they wanted, has filled a position in a company, and has shown ...that the program really does work."

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

Vermont as an "early implementing state" fully realized that it would be confronted with the many changes and frustrations inherent with any new initiative. As the Workforce Investment Act unfolded and problems occurred, we were heartened by the helpful and constructive manner in which our DOL partners both at the Boston Regional office and in the national office worked with Vermont to fashion the best solutions. We are confident that the full implementation of WIA has been more successful because of the respectful and professional working relationships engendered by the Department of Labor.

**TABLE 1**

<b>PROGRAM YEAR PARTICIPATION SUMMARY</b>		
<b>Program</b>	<b>Total Served</b>	<b>Total Exiters</b>
Adults	499	346
Dislocated Workers	182	138
Older Youth	550	167
Younger Youth	149	43

**TABLE 2**

<b>NEGOTIATED PERFORMANCE MEASURES SUMMARY</b>				
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Negotiated Level</b>	<b>Actual Performance Levels</b>		
Participant Customer	75%	91%		
Satisfaction Score			Sample Frame	123
Employer Customer	65%	80%		
Satisfaction Score			Sample Frame	33
<i>Exit Period Covered by Measures: October 1998 through September 1999</i>				
Adult Entered	71%	66%	Numerator	213
Employment			Denominator	323
Adult Employment	81%	75%	Numerator	199
Retention			Denominator	264
Adult Earnings	\$2,927	\$3,515	Numerator	\$927,829
Change			Denominator	264
Dislocated Worker	77%	76%	Numerator	170
Entered Employment			Denominator	224
Dislocated Worker	86%	89%	Numerator	152
Employment Retention			Denominator	170
Dislocated Worker	88%	97%	Numerator	\$1,493,821
Earnings Replacement			Denominator	\$1,539,068
Older Youth	71%	72%	Numerator	46
Entered Employment			Denominator	64
Older Youth	78%	70%	Numerator	38
Retention			Denominator	54
Older Youth	\$2,150	\$2,396	Numerator	\$129,360
Earnings Change			Denominator	54
<i>Exit Period Covered by Measure: July 1999 through June 2000</i>				
Younger Youth	40%	48%	Numerator	15
Diploma			Denominator	31

**TABLE 3 – A**

**SUMMARY OF STATE PERFORMANCE FOR SELECTED GROUPS**

<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Public Assistance Recipient</b>			<b>Veterans</b>			<b>Individuals With Disabilities</b>		
<i>Exit Period Covered by Measures: October 1998 through September 1999</i>									
Adult Entered	68%	63	Num.	58%	19	Num.	59%	66	Num.
Employment		93	Den.		33	Den.		111	Den.
Adult Employment	75%	55	Num.	88%	23	Num.	71%	55	Num.
Retention		73	Den.		26	Den.		77	Den.
Adult Earnings	\$3,423	\$249,904	Num.	\$2,687	\$69,857	Num.	\$2,995	\$230,640	Num.
Change		73	Den.		26	Den.		77	Den.
Dislocated Worker			Num.	74%	34	Num.	53%	10	Num.
Entered Employment			Den.		46	Den.		19	Den.
Dislocated Worker			Num.	88%	30	Num.	100%	10	Num.
Employment Retention			Den.		34	Den.		10	Den.
Dislocated Worker			Num.	157%	\$338,760	Num.	277%	\$92,861	Num.
Earnings Replacement			Den.		\$215,937	Den.		\$33,584	Den.
Older Youth	64%	9	Num.	0%	0	Num.	70%	23	Num.
Entered Employment		14	Den.		0	Den.		33	Den.
Older Youth	50%	5	Num.	0%	0	Num.	65%	17	Num.
Retention		10	Den.		0	Den.		26	Den.
Older Youth	\$1,223	\$12,229	Num.	\$0	\$0.00	Num.	\$2,128	\$55,336	Num.
Earnings Change		10	Den.		0	Den.		26	Den.
<i>Exit Period Covered by Measure: July 1999 through June 2000</i>									
Younger Youth	75%	3	Num.			Num.	71%	5	Num.
Diploma		4	Den.			Den.		7	Den.

**TABLE 3 – B**

<b>SUMMARY OF STATE PERFORMANCE FOR SELECTED GROUPS</b>									
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Older Individuals</b>			<b>Displaced Homemakers</b>			<b>Out-of-School Youth</b>		
<i>Exit Period Covered by Measures: October 1998 through September 1999</i>									
Adult Entered	47%	7	Num.			Num.			Num.
Employment		15	Den.			Den.			Den.
Adult Employment	86%	6	Num.			Num.			Num.
Retention		7	Den.			Den.			Den.
Adult Earnings	\$3,816	\$26,710	Num.			Num.			Num.
Change		7	Den.			Den.			Den.
Dislocated Worker	67%	32	Num.	100%	1	Num.			Num.
Entered Employment		48	Den.		1	Den.			Den.
Dislocated Worker	84%	27	Num.	100%	1	Num.			Num.
Employment Retention		32	Den.		1	Den.			Den.
Dislocated Worker	94%	\$246,389	Num.	91%	\$7,433	Num.			Num.
Earnings Replacement		\$262,871	Den.		\$8,205	Den.			Den.
Older Youth			Num.			Num.	73%	38	Num.
Entered Employment			Den.			Den.		52	Den.
Older Youth			Num.			Num.	71%	32	Num.
Retention			Den.			Den.		45	Den.
Older Youth			Num.			Num.	\$2,501	\$112,555	Num.
Earnings Change			Den.			Den.		45	Den.
<i>Exit Period Covered by Measure: July 1999 through June 2000</i>									
Younger Youth			Num.			Num.	16%	3	Num.
Diploma			Den.			Den.		19	Den.

**TABLE 3 – C**

<b>SUMMARY OF STATE PERFORMANCE FOR SELECTED GROUPS</b>						
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Received Training Services</b>			<b>Received Core/Intensive Svcs Only</b>		
<i>Exit Period Covered by Measures: October 1998 through September 1999</i>						
Adult Entered	68%	140	Num.	62%	73	Num.
Employment		206	Den.		117	Den.
Adult Employment	77%	138	Num.	73%	61	Num.
Retention		180	Den.		84	Den.
Adult Earnings	\$3,512	\$927,289	Num.	\$3,031	\$254,638	Num.
Change		264	Den.		84	Den.
Dislocated Worker	76%	170	Num.	78%	35	Num.
Entered Employment		224	Den.		45	Den.
Dislocated Worker	89%	152	Num.	89%	31	Num.
Employment Retention		170	Den.		35	Den.
Dislocated Worker	97%	\$1,493,821	Num.	93%	\$278,928	Num.
Earnings Replacement		\$1,539,068	Den.		\$299,904	Den.
Older Youth	72%	46	Num.	69%	31	Num.
Entered Employment		64	Den.		45	Den.
Older Youth	69%	38	Num.	65%	22	Num.
Retention		55	Den.		34	Den.
Older Youth	\$2,291	\$126,018	Num.	\$1,540	\$52,352	Num.
Earnings Change		55	Den.		34	Den.
<i>Exit Period Covered by Measure: July 1999 through June 2000</i>						
Younger Youth	0%	0	Num.	45%	14	Num.
Diploma		0	Den.		31	Den.

**TABLE 4**

<b>COST OF PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</b>	
<b>Program Activity</b>	<b>Total Federal Spending</b>
Local Adults	\$2,260,543
Local Dislocated Workers	\$995,241
Local Youth	\$1,041,595
Rapid Response	\$56,491
Statewide Required Activities	\$253,306
Statewide Allowable Activities	
<i>Describe each program activity</i>	
1. Non-traditional trng for women	\$37,369
2. Supported Employment w/VR	\$40,681
3.	\$0
4.	\$0
5.	\$0
6.	\$0
7.	\$0
8.	\$0
9.	\$0
10.	\$0
<b>Total All Federal Spending</b>	<b>\$4,685,226</b>