

CONNECTICUT WORKS CAREER CENTER
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT

One-Stop Profile

April 1997

Based on a Site Visit Conducted During June 1996

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DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL CONTEXT

Willimantic is a four-square-mile municipal service district adjacent to the larger town of Windham in Connecticut's Windham County. The local area has suffered from a depressed economy since the closure in 1984 of American Thread Mills, a large textile manufacturing firm—which at its height of production employed more than 2,500 in the area. Once known as “thread city,” Windham, with a labor force of just under 10,000, was left without a manufacturing or industrial base. Many in the town were convinced that the town would soon see the return of industry, but this has not yet happened.

Willimantic has gradually become the “governmental center” for the largely rural Northeast Connecticut region. Partly in response to diminishing resources for workforce development programs, the local One-Stop system has encouraged the development of a broad partnership. Particularly for a relatively small center, it has also achieved a high degree of co-location of managing and service delivery partners.

As described in the Connecticut state One-Stop profile, the primary emphasis of Connecticut's One-Stop system has been to establish close collaboration between the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL)—the state agency responsible for providing ES and UI services—and Regional Workforce Development Boards, which are responsible for coordinating local education and training policy and administering JTPA and adult education funding. Starting in 1989, a system of Transition Centers—co-administered by the CTDOL and Regional Workforce Development Boards—tested a model for the integrated delivery of career services to dislocated workers. In Willimantic and elsewhere in the state, these centers provided a foundation for the evolution of an integrated One-Stop system.

In the spring of 1994, the Connecticut Legislature passed Public Act 94-116, which provided formal legislative authority for implementing a statewide system of Job Centers focused on the delivery of workforce development services to the general

public. Under the One-Stop initiative, these Centers—named *Connecticut Works* Centers—are mandated to link the programs administered by the Connecticut Department of Labor, the Regional Workforce Development Boards, and the Department of Economic and Community Development, and are encouraged to involve other public and private education, human services, and employment and training providers in order to deliver coordinated workforce development services to employers and individuals.

Several key variables have influenced the development of the Willimantic *Connecticut Works* Center. These factors include the following:

- (1) The area served by the Willimantic center has suffered from a depressed economy and high unemployment rates since the decline of its major manufacturing base in the 1970s.
- (2) 25% of the population of Willimantic is Hispanic. Most of the Hispanic population comprise immigrants from Puerto Rico, who came over the last several decades to work in surrounding farms and industries over the last several decades. Many of these individuals have only limited English language fluency and few have participated in public employment and training programs.
- (3) Funding for all types of social services has declined in the region, which has made consolidation of efforts through One-Stop an attractive option. As a result, the Willimantic center has succeeded in obtaining on-site participation from a number of local agency partners.

Local Vision and Goals for One-Stop

The local vision for the Willimantic One-Stop has changed over time. At first, the Willimantic One-Stop was conceived primarily as a place in which several partners would be co-located. Over time, this has evolved into a vision for creating an integrated service delivery system. Center partners first began by learning as much as they could about services each of the partner agencies provided. Gradually, they found ways to “put the whole equation together” to create more effective service delivery.

As they became more familiar with the work of the various agencies and organizations represented in the center, partners began to realize that many of them provided similar services. As the local One-Stop system has evolved, a major goal has become the elimination of duplication of effort through the consolidation of services. Staff at the Willimantic *Connecticut Works* Center believe that their partnership has been successful partly because the dearth of resources has forced them to be flexible

and creative. To achieve their mutual goals, local agencies have had to “pull together” instead of continuing to operate separate and discrete programs.

ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE OF THE LOCAL ONE-STOP INITIATIVE

Governance and Management Structure. Coordination of activities among partners in the Willimantic Career Center dates to the establishment in 1994 of the local “transition center” for dislocated workers. As part of the organization and governance of the transition center, five agencies, including the key partners in the current One-Stop initiative, formed a “regional steering committee” to determine funding and staffing for JTPA dislocated worker programs and services. Through their collaboration in the dislocated worker transition center, these partners developed solid working relations prior to One-Stop implementation. With minor changes, the regional steering committee established for the transition center has evolved into the management team for the local One-Stop system.

Policy oversight and administration of the *Connecticut Works* Career Center system are shared by the Regional Workforce Development Boards (RWDBs) and the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL), through the establishment of local management teams.

Regional Workforce Development Boards are mandated by state legislation to assess human resource development needs in their respective regions, plan for regional employment and training programs, oversee workforce programs and services, and coordinate a broad range of employment, education, training, and related services. Boards also administer funds for JTPA Title II and Title III services and adult education funds.¹ Regional Boards are also responsible for approving the annual service plans prepared by each of the *Connecticut Works* Centers in their region. After approval by the RWDB chair and the appropriate chief elected official, Career Center plans are forwarded to the Connecticut Department of Labor and the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission—a statewide policy board—for approval.

¹ Most Regional Workforce Development Boards in Connecticut are moving away from providing JTPA services directly. In keeping with this trend, the Northeast Connecticut RWDB oversees and administers third-party service providers for delivery of most JTPA services.

The Local Management Team established to oversee the operation of two planned *Connecticut Works* Centers in the Northeast Connecticut region includes three voting members and three advisory (non-voting) members. Voting members, also referred to as the “executive committee” of the local management team, include the following:

- The executive director of the Northeast Regional Workforce Development Board, called Workforce One.
- The ES/UI director of the Willimantic *Connecticut Works* Center, which was already certified as by the state as a One-Stop career center at the time of the evaluation site visit.
- The ES/UI director of the Danielson Job Center, which had not yet been certified at the time of the evaluation site visit.

To preserve equal representation between the CTDOL and the Regional Board, the Board representative has one vote and each of the CTDOL ES/UI representatives have one-half vote.

According to the local by-laws governing the Willimantic One-Stop, all entities that are contracted service providers for workforce development programs are excluded from participating as voting members of the executive committee, even if they are public agencies.² Representatives of two such agencies serve in an advisory capacity as non-voting members of the Local Management Team. These are:

- The president of the Quinebaug Valley Community Technical College, or her appointed representative. The college’s president is also a member of the Regional Workforce Development Board.
- The executive director of the ACCESS Agency, a Community Action Program.

A third non-voting member of the Local Management Team is the field manager of the Department of Social Services.

The Local Management Team has two major functions: (1) making financial and cost allocation decisions related to center operations and (2) establishing local One-Stop policies and priorities. Financial decisions are generally discussed at meetings of the three voting partners. Among the budget issues discussed at these meetings are shared equipment purchases, allocation of staff time and costs across different funding

² According to state regulations, only for-profit entities must be excluded from local governance teams.

streams, and joint marketing efforts. During the early phase of One-Stop implementation, these meetings were held several times a month and tended to be fairly long because there were many cost allocation issues that needed to be discussed. After One-Stop operations stabilized, management team meetings were held monthly and were fairly brief. In addition to these formal meetings, the two CTDOL ES/UI directors and the RWDB director have frequent telephone conversations.

The full Local Management Team (including non-voting partners) meets about every quarter. These meetings tend to be focused on broader local policy discussions such as inter-agency service integration and providing “seamless services” to present and potential One-Stop customers. The three non-voting members of the management team provide substantial input into the design and delivery of local One-Stop services.

Agencies Involved in the One-Stop Initiative

The agencies with an on-site presence at the Willimantic center include the following:

- *The Connecticut Department of Labor*, whose 16 staff at the Willimantic Connecticut Works Center provide services funded by the ES, UI, and Veterans Employment and Training programs. All CTDOL staff in Willimantic are located at this One-Stop center.
- *Workforce One*, Regional Workforce Development Board for Northeast Connecticut. The main offices of the Board are in the nearby town of Chaplin. One Board staff provides Title IIA and IIC intake at the center twice weekly.
- *Quinebaug Valley Community Technical College* is an important off-site local provider of education and training services to One-Stop. Using funding from an EDWAA grant, the center also employs two interns from the college to staff the center’s career resource library. The college, whose main campus in Killingly, has two locations in the region, one of which is a large annex located within the same wing of the Tyler square shopping mall as the career center.
- *Windham Regional Community Council (WRCC)* provides services under contracts with DSS and Regional Workforce Development Board for services to JTPA-eligible youth and adults and JOBS-eligible individuals. Services provided by the one on-site staff person and another staff person in WRCC’s main offices in Willimantic include administration of on-the-job training services and the provision of assessment, training referral, and case management services. In providing these services, Council staff work with CTDOL ES Career Development specialists and JTPA intake staff to identify customers

who may be eligible for the available services. Council staff working in the Willimantic center's career services and community services units also coordinate employer outreach efforts. One Council staff provides employment services for 16 to 21 year-old youths, and, although they had not yet begun to do so at the time of the site visit, these staff were planning to provide specialized on-site job search workshops for youth.

- *Eastern Connecticut Regional Education Service Center (EASTCONN)* is a non-profit educational organization created by local education agencies from 36 municipalities throughout eastern Connecticut. Under contract to the Regional Workforce Development Board, EASTCONN houses three staff at the Willimantic center to serve customers eligible for JTPA and Older Worker programs. The services provided by EASTCONN staff at the Willimantic center include assessment for dislocated workers and assessment and counseling for JTPA Title IIA and IIC participants. EASTCONN staff also develop all center-wide assessment materials and train other case worker and counseling staff in the use of these materials. They also supply the office with brochures on adult and community education opportunities within the region.
- *Green Thumb* has one on-site representative who provides job search assistance to limited-income individuals 55 years old and over.

Important off-site partners that coordinate closely with the One-Stop also include:

- The Willimantic Office of the *Department of Social Services*. Although there were no contractual or financial agreements, DSS has arranged for CTDOL staff to provide regularly scheduled orientation sessions at the One-Stop center on the employment-related services available to customers receiving welfare. At the time of the evaluation visit, there were plans to provide DSS staff with space for out-stationed staff and access to the *Connecticut Works* database. DSS case workers refer their clients to relevant services available at the Center.

Examples of center services to which DSS staff might refer their clients include Project HIRE (JOBS) provided by the Windham Regional Community Council, JTPA Titles IIA and IIC services provided by EASTCONN and the Windham Regional Community Council, and education referrals and services provided with education set-aside funds to prepare individuals with the basic skills they need to enter occupational skills training or education programs.³

³ Education set-aside services available through the Coordinated Education and Training Opportunities (CETO) program are operated at the Willimantic center by EASTCONN.

Since the evaluation visit, Connecticut legislation has mandated that CTDOL Job Centers provide the work-search portion of welfare-to-work services. This has not had any immediate impact on service delivery at the center. The Community Council and the ACCESS agency (see below) continue to offer workshops for welfare customers at their own facilities, and Council staff facilitate an on-site job club geared toward welfare recipients in the conference rooms of the career center as part of their contract with DSS.

- *ACCESS Agency, Inc.* is a comprehensive education, employment and training, and social service agency serving the Windham and Tolland areas of northeastern Connecticut. Located in a large office directly across the street from the One-Stop, ACCESS is co-located with HealthFirst, a community health center created as an ACCESS initiative. ACCESS representatives participate on the interagency One-Stop team that plans and schedules workshops for center customers.

At the time of the site visit, ACCESS was beginning a performance-based contract with the state's Department of Social Services to place 190 AFDC recipients into employment. ACCESS also provides a number of educational and support services such as the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program, bilingual English-Spanish public service announcements, and Head Start.

In alliance with the Regional Workforce Development Board, the Technical College, and other partners, ACCESS had just completed the first year of operation of a "Northeast Connecticut Entrepreneur Center," using federal DOL funding. The Entrepreneur Center offers an eight-week course three times per year to teach prospective business owners the skills necessary to operate their own business, including marketing, accounting, and elementary tax law. Since the evaluation site visit, ACCESS has entered into contractual relations as a full One-Stop partner agency.

The center also maintains referral linkages with the Willimantic offices of the Bureau of Rehabilitation. Most often, customers receiving vocational rehabilitation services are referred to the One-Stop center for assessment services. Most of these customers receive job placement services directly from the Bureau, although these services are also available to these customers at the One-Stop center. There are as yet no coordinated school-to-career activities in the Willimantic area.

Legislative/Organizational Initiatives to Support the Local One-Stop Vision and System

In 1989, the Connecticut legislature established the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC), whose mandate was to plan for the coordination of existing employment and training programs. In 1992, the Connecticut General Assembly passed Public Act 92-145, which authorized the establishment of Regional Workforce Development Boards in each of the nine SDAs in the state. All Boards were mandated to have a majority of private sector representatives; the Board Chair must be from the private sector. This legislation, together with subsequent legislation (Public Act 93-134), defined the following functions for RWDBs: (1) assessment of regional needs and priorities for employment and training programs; (2) planning and coordination of these programs and preparation of an annual workforce development plan; (3) review of grant proposals and plans submitted to state agencies for employment and training programs that directly affect the region.

There were no special local legislative or organizational initiatives supporting the Willimantic One-Stop at the time of the site visit. However, the Regional Workforce Board was working with the local Council of Governments to explore more effective ways to involve chief elected officials in planning for integrated education, training, and employment in the Willimantic area. In particular, the Board is trying to involve local elected officials in workforce planning, following a model developed in the area served by the neighboring Danielson center.⁴

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

Partners in the Willimantic *Connecticut Works* Career Center have developed several communication mechanisms at the local level to coordinate their system-building efforts. In addition to the local management team, there are a number of committees and “work teams” that are composed of local front-line partner staff. These teams meet to share ideas on ways to improve the integration and delivery of services to customers. Although the Center director provides general guidance and goals, front-line staff and supervisors coordinate the activities of these teams. Active teams at the time of the site visit included the following:

⁴ In the area served by the neighboring Danielson CTDOL Center, 12 local elected officials have formed an economic alliance called the “New Coalition” that is developing a regional development plan with attention to employment and training needs.

- *Workshop Committee.* This team meets once a month to decide on what workshops will be offered to center customers and to coordinate the scheduling of these workshops. All of the agencies with an on-site presence at the Center participate in these meetings.
- *Assessment Work Group.* This team of counselors from various agencies was formed to coordinate assessment methods and to discuss the appropriate assessment tools for Center customers.
- *Marketing Committee.* A team comprised of staff from three of the One-Stop partner agencies (CTDOL, the RWDB, and the Windham Regional Community Council, which provides JTPA services) has been formed to promote local marketing efforts. The thrust of marketing efforts is to promote the idea that the *Connecticut Works* offices are not just unemployment offices, but that a much wider range of partners and services are available. In particular, the committee is focusing on getting broader radio coverage. The committee, together with management staff, was also preparing for a “Grand Opening” of the Center scheduled for October 1996. This event, intended to publicize Center services, was expected to draw a large number of local political and community representatives.

In addition to participating on the management team, the center director also represents workforce development partners in meetings of the Windham regional municipal managers, who meet regularly to discuss issues of coordinating a variety of public services including workforce development and social services.

To support ongoing One-Stop operations, the state-level *Connecticut Works* office provides centers with regular updates on One-Stop policy and implementation issues. To promote communication among state and regional staff, the *Connecticut Works* Office also sponsors quarterly management team meetings involving state *Connecticut Works* staff, CTDOL Job Center directors, and Workforce Development Boards directors.

FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS, BUDGETING, AND FISCAL ISSUES

A total of \$178,000 was allocated for the Danielson/Willimantic SDA from the state’s first and second year DOL One-Stop implementation grants to support system transformation in the Danielson/Willimantic area.⁵ The Regional Workforce

⁵ Approximately \$55,000 of this amount was allocated to facilitate the transformation of the Danielson Job Center into a One-Stop career center. The remaining \$123,000 was allocated to the Willimantic One-Stop.

Development Board was the principal grant administrator, responsible for \$143,000 in implementation grant funds. The regional office of the Connecticut Department of Labor received the remainder of the grant. State allocations to One-Stop regions were intended to address regional needs to develop the capacity to provide self-service opportunities for One-Stop customers and support other changes needed to transition to a One-Stop system, such as office design. Although grants to cover personnel costs were allowed, only those costs directly related to new functions brought about by the transition to One-Stop were approved.

The regional office of the Connecticut Department of Labor used its \$35,000 in implementation grant funds to defray the costs of relocating Board staff to the One-Stop center; purchasing equipment such as personal computers, workstations for visiting partner organizations and kiosks, and installing a new telephone network to accommodate computer links and additional staff. The RWDB used its portion of the One-Stop implementation grant:

- To develop the infrastructure to connect the Regional Workforce Development Board to the CTDOL information network;
- To help pay for technical services provided by outside contractors;
- To help pay for the salaries and benefits of RWDB personnel providing services to the general public, including assisting customers in the Career Services Center, helping to conduct intake, providing career counseling, and helping customers prepare resumes.

Formal cost allocation agreements have been established between the Regional Board and CTDOL concerning shared costs of equipment, and expansion of the telephone and telecommunications network and certain recurring costs associated with universal services (e.g., phone bank toll charges). At the present time, CTDOL pays all lease costs at the center. A portion of One-Stop implementation funds granted to CTDOL—approximately \$28,000 per annum—are used to defray the cost of providing space for partnering staff.

CTDOL and the Regional Board also entered into non-financial interagency agreements with the Windham Regional Community Council, the Department of Social Services and the ACCESS agency. These agreements specify respective roles and responsibilities of these agencies and their staff. Specific formal non-financial agreements include the following:

- *CTDOL* is responsible for:

- providing work areas for partner staff;
- providing training in the use of Job Bank and labor market information;
- accepting referrals from partner agencies and providing placement services for their customers;
- providing staff for monthly case management meetings;
- providing a community service work area on a scheduled basis for additional partner staff;
- providing special center orientations for referred customers (in the agreement with DSS only).
- The *Regional Board* is responsible for:
 - providing direct referral of customers for JTPA and Older Worker services to partnering agencies, and for coordinating appointments with partner staff; and
 - facilitating monthly case management meetings of all partner staff.
- *EASTCONN* is responsible for:
 - out-stationing staff for case management and customer activities for JTPA Title IIA, 5% Older Worker, and JTPA Title III programs;
 - developing the assessment component for case managers and providing training to other partner staff in its use;
 - participating in monthly case management meetings;
 - providing Adult Education staff on-site during registration periods as appropriate; and
 - providing brochures on Adult and Community Education offerings.
- *Windham Regional Community Council* is responsible for
 - providing staff to coordinate employer outreach efforts with CTDOL and the Board;
 - providing assessment, training referral, and case management services for JTPA Title IIC customers;
 - participating in monthly case management meetings;
 - planning specialized services for youth including possible job workshops;

- providing information on other (off-site) Council services; and
- working with the career development unit and JTPA caseworkers to identify customers who have the potential for on-the-job training.
- Although co-location has not yet taken place, formal agreements have been made with the *Department of Social Services* which is responsible for:
 - referring appropriate customers for program services offered at the center including Project Hire (JOBS), JTPA Titles IIA and IIC, CETO, and Job Services;
 - when appropriate, out-stationing DSS staff to provide eligibility determination; and
 - providing job leads for entry into the *Connecticut Works* Job Bank.

There are no current plans to develop fee-for-service arrangements with employers or job-seekers.

DESIGN OF THE LOCAL ONE-STOP INITIATIVE

Evolution and General Description of Local Design

In 1994, partners in what is now known as the *Connecticut Works* Center, cooperated in establishing a Transition Center for dislocated workers at the existing Willimantic Job Center. Transition centers consolidated employment and re-training services in a convenient location from which individuals could conduct self-directed job searches. These customers had access to free use of telephones and faxes for local and long-distance use, copy machines, assistance in writing and printing cover letters and resumes, free mailing, and access to a reference library which included books, newspapers, and other written reference materials. Job seekers also had access to professional support from trained staff, and access to group workshops and peer support activities.

The Willimantic Transition Center thus represented an early collaboration among several local partners. Local staff regard their experiences in reaching across agency lines to provide coordinated services as an important step in their progress toward providing integrated career services to a universal population. Although transition centers were originally conceived as a response to assist targeted populations, they provided an important bridge to providing a variety of job search and support services to the general population. By the time the Willimantic Center was certified as a One-

Stop center and moved to its present location within the same shopping mall in March 1996, partner agencies had been working closely together for over a year.

Relevance of the Local Design to the Four Federal Goals

The Willimantic *Connecticut Works* Center has made substantial progress toward the four federal One-Stop goals of providing universal access to services, making a range of service options available to customers, integrating services, and developing a system in which information is used to promote the continuous improvement of services. The following sections are intended to provide a brief overview of the center's approach to these federal themes.

Universal Access

Services available to the general public were greatly expanded as a result of One-Stop implementation and parallel local and state initiatives. Center partners built on their experiences in providing high-quality customer services for dislocated workers in the Transition Center that was established at the Willimantic Job Center before One-Stop implementation. There has also been a conscious move away from a "government facility" or "unemployment office" feeling, in which clients showed up every two weeks to wait in line for their checks—or in the words of one long-time employee, a place where "nobody in their right mind would actually *want* to come"—to a place where all people can come to get a variety of information. The important difference under One-Stop is that many services that were previously reserved for participants of categorically funded programs are now available to the general public. Services available to all customers include group workshops, one-on-one assistance with resume preparation, as well as access to the phone bank, fax machines, and copiers. As part of its universal services, the Willimantic Center offers customers a range of levels of staff support.

All customers are invited to receive a group orientation to the One-Stop Center that covers the goals of the *Connecticut Works* system. The orientation also provides customers with an overview of the education, training, employment, and support services that are either available at the Center or through referral to other organizations. Group workshops are an important element of the Center's universal services. All customers may attend job search and career workshops, provided by center staff, that cover the important steps in a successful job search. Topics discussed include resume preparation, networking, targeting employers, and preparing for the job interview.

Services available to all job seekers also include a range of services that can be accessed on a self-service basis. For example, job seekers have access to a Resource Library as well as a phone bank. Customers may use Talent Bank software to produce formatted hard-copy resumes as well as post electronic versions that are available to employers through the Internet.

Customer Choice

The Connecticut vision for One-Stop emphasizes that effective customer choice begins by providing customers the information they need to make informed choices about career possibilities. In line with this vision for One-Stop, center staff and management emphasize the importance of dealing with the “whole person” through career planning services as opposed to only help with finding a job. Both staff and individuals interviewed in focus groups noted a major differences in terms of the variety of services available, and the ability of customers to choose those services that they wanted including: direct access to job listings, workshops, and career services such as assistance with finding information on employers and developing resumes.

Customers can also access a variety of information from off-site. Examples include toll-free access via modem to the Public Access Labor Market Information System (PALIS) bulletin boards. Customers with Internet service can also access a variety of services via CTDOL’s World Wide Web site. One such service is America’s Talent Bank, which allows Internet users to compose and post resumes from off-site locations. Customers are also able to enroll for unemployment benefits either in person at the Center, or by telephone to a regional center.

Counselors will schedule appointments with anybody requesting this service, regardless of the person’s eligibility for program funding, to discuss career planning or job search needs and objectives and to discuss educational and training alternatives.

At present, the center does not offer extended hours of operation during evenings or weekends.

Integrated Services

Center staff work in a number of units, many of which are staffed entirely or primarily by CTDOL employees. These include a *basic services* unit that processes unemployment claims and assists individuals with the job search; an *employment planning* unit that assists dislocated and profiled workers and provides counseling in

career decision making and career development. Audit, adjudication, business services, and office support staff are also entirely staffed by CTDOL.

The *career services* unit, on the other hand, is fully integrated across partner staff. For example, career services staff from four on-site partner agencies—CTDOL, EASTCONN, Windham Regional Community Council, and the Regional Workforce Board—provide assessment, classroom training, on-the-job training and job search assistance for dislocated workers. Caseloads are divided among the staff of each agency during monthly case management meetings. Other aspects of career services are also staffed by agencies with particular specialization. For example, two administrative assistants, working as interns for the community-technical college assist customers in the resource library; one Board staff person provides intake for JTPA Title II customers and staff from EASTCONN provide Title II customers with assessment and counseling services; and staff from Windham Regional Community Council provide employment services for youth.

With the exception of specialized workshops—such as those offered by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) on topics related to older workers or workshops offered through the state’s office for higher education on opportunities and financial aid in higher education—all workshops are designed and conducted by full time staff of the One-Stop partner agencies.

Because the Willimantic center is relatively small, unlike all the larger *Connecticut Works* centers, there is no greeter position; rather there is an intake desk staffed by a person with knowledge of the range of services offered at the center.

Performance-Driven/Outcome-Based

As in all of Connecticut’s One-Stops, staff have access to quarterly reviews based on a standardized set of core measures developed by CTDOL’s Performance Measurement Unit. These measures, designed to offer a balanced picture of Center performance, provide staff with information that allows them to compare outcomes for their customers with those for other offices in the state and to identify areas in which services can be improved. Some of these performance measures include: indices of overall individual and employer customer satisfaction, entered employment rates, and the average time it takes customers receive services or benefits (see Connecticut state profile for a complete list of performance measures).

Physical Facilities

Since 1990, the Connecticut Department of Labor has had its Willimantic Job Center offices in Tyler Square, a modern and attractive strip mall located about one mile from central Willimantic. With the opening of the *Connecticut Works* center in 1996, partner agencies moved into a larger facility in a wing of the mall that is also occupied by an annex “campus” of the local community-technical college. As the customer enters, she sees an information/intake desk in front, and a kiosks area that provides access to the state’s Job Bank. The back part of the facilities are occupied by training rooms and the left portion of the building houses a career development center, with a library, phone bank, several personal computers, a fax machine, and a customer mail area, where customers can receive postage and assistance preparing and sending resumes and cover letters. The central area of the office is divided into office cubicles for partner staff. Counselor cubicles are located in a private area on the right side of the center.

IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL SUPPORT MECHANISMS

Staffing Arrangements

At the time of the site visit there were 23 staff members at the Willimantic center. Slightly more than half the staff—16 persons—were CTDOL employees, with the remaining 7 staff coming from the remaining on-site partners. Staff were assigned to one of nine functional units:

- *Basic Services* is staffed entirely by CTDOL employees. The unit processes unemployment claims and provides job search assistance. One Veterans Employment Services representative, also a CTDOL employee, works in this unit.
- *Employment Planning*, which is also staffed by CT DOL, has a unit supervisor, who offers services to profiled dislocated workers, and two career development specialists who assist all One-Stop customers with career decision-making, job referrals, and other placement services.
- *Career Services*, coordinated by a CTDOL employee, is cross-staffed by all key participating partners. This unit provides services to dislocated workers, economically disadvantaged workers, and the general public. Services include workshops and access to a career services library. This unit is divided by the following service categories:
 - *Services to Dislocated Workers*. Assessment is provided by a staff from multiple agencies, including a specialist from the local educational consortium (EASTCONN), a Senior Employment Counselor and JTPA-funded staff from the Regional Workforce

Development Board, staff from the JTPA contractor (Windham Regional Community Council) and two administrative assistants from the community technical college.

- *Services to JTPA IIA Customers.* Services include assessment, referral to classroom training, administration of on-the-job training, and job search assistance for individuals who have limited skills and limited income. Staff include an assessment specialist (EASTCONN), three counselors including a bilingual counselor (EASTCONN), and a JTPA intake worker, employed by RWDB.
- *Employment Services for Youth (16-21).* Two youth employment counselors from the Windham Regional Community Council provide employment-related services to economically disadvantaged youth using funds from JTPA Title IIB and C.
- *Adjudication.* Staff employed by the CTDOL determine eligibility for unemployment benefits. Unit staff include a coordinator and two adjudication specialists.
- *Field Audit.* One CTDOL field auditor assigned to this unit ensures employer compliance with UI tax law.
- *Business Services.* One CTDOL business services consultant provides assistance on apprenticeship, customized job training and special services to employers.
- *Community Services.*
 - *Green Thumb Program* has one representative conducting job search assistance for individuals 55 years old and over who have limited income.
 - *Department of Social Services “Project Hire.”* Under a separate contract with the Department of Social Services, the Windham Regional Community Center employs a JOBS program manager and one job developer to provide job search assistance to AFDC recipients.

Capacity Building

Willimantic staff have benefited from several state-level efforts initiated through CTDOL’s staff development unit (SDU). Prior to the opening of the Willimantic *Connecticut Works* center in 1996, for example, SDU offered an orientation training for current and potential partner staff on the One-Stop vision and philosophy. Other state-sponsored training sessions have included modules on dealing with working in a

changed work environment, different organization styles, and a variety of personality types and motivational styles.

Local partners have also conducted their own training. EASTCONN, for example, conducted a training on group facilitation skills for EDWAA participants, and was planning to conduct similar sessions for partner staff working with other populations. Other training has involved staff-led sessions that explain the various programmatic reporting requirements; sessions led by the regional director of the Department of Social Services on impending welfare reforms, and informal presentations by various partner staff during whole-office monthly staff meetings on their service delivery philosophies and strategies.

Management Information Systems (MIS)

During the early development of the Willimantic center, one of the major problems was that the various partners offering JTPA services had a different system for case management and reporting. Since the evaluation visit, information management systems have been completely integrated across partner staff, using the state's mainframe system. Although the system is less user-friendly than PC-based systems, all partners input the same information and confidentiality (e.g., access to UI wage data) is insured through the use of passwords. Unlike the IMS system used by JTPA partners, the state's mainframe system does not have case management capabilities and all case notes are kept in paper files.

Labor Market Information and Related Information Technology

The Willimantic One-Stop has benefited from state's emphasis on providing readily accessible and easily understandable labor market information as part of self-service options at One-Stops. For several years, the state has maintained a bulletin board service for job seekers, which is accessible toll-free throughout the state by modem. In 1996, CTDOL also began offering access to a variety of information through its Internet World Wide Web site. Through the state's Internet home page, job seekers can access information on state and national Job Banks, get tips on their job search, post their resumes on America's Talent Bank, find information on unemployment compensation, review labor market trends, and find out which career areas are in greatest demand in the state. Students can also access an "LMI for Students" Web site that suggests how to select a career path and describes the types of attributes that employers value most in their workers. Businesses can post job openings

electronically and review Talent Bank resumes. They can also obtain a variety of information on OSHA and ADA compliance as well as on wage and workplace standards.

According to local respondents, many of these technological improvements have been very well received, particularly by individual customers. Customers and staff alike have been pleased with the Talent Bank and its ability to generate high quality resumes. Although a great deal of labor market information is now available, some staff indicated that despite some state training efforts, labor market information requires substantial interpretation and is not widely used by individual customers. Rather, labor market information is generally viewed as a useful tool for counselors who can use the data to determine local labor conditions and to identify growing sectors within the economy.

Marketing

Marketing activities were seen as largely the responsibility of the state. Much of the state's recent marketing activity has centered on making information available to the public through its well-developed Internet website which has links to state and national Job Banks and the Talent Bank which is being piloted state-wide in Connecticut. The state has also produced a brochure available at the Willimantic center describing the *Connecticut Works* vision and services available at local centers.

Local partners, including the Job Center Director and the Board's Executive Director, have also appeared in radio broadcasts explaining the services that are available at the Willimantic center. As a free public service, the local newspaper also publishes a monthly calendar of events, including group workshops, offered at the center. The center was also planning to run paid newspaper advertisements.

DELIVERY OF ONE-STOP SERVICES TO CUSTOMERS

Services for Individual Customers

Unlike larger *Connecticut Works* offices that have a specialized "greeter" position, because the Willimantic office is quite small, there is no need (or space) for a greeter. As a customer enters, she comes to a customer service desk that is within several feet of the front door. The person staffing the desk, who is generally from the Basic Services Unit (described above), asks if the customer has an appointment. If so, she is then referred directly to the appropriate staff person. If the person does not have an appointment, the customer service staffer asks about the reason for the visit. The

customer service desk has a computer terminal, so if a person has a question about filing for unemployment insurance, for example, the staff person can do a preliminary check of the person's eligibility by entering her name or social security number.

Depending on the customer's needs, she will be directed to the self-service area or kiosks, or if she would like to register for unemployment benefits or dislocated worker services, she is referred to a worker in the Basic Services Unit who can determine eligibility for JTPA Title III services, open a file for a UI claim, and conduct UI profiling. Basic Services staff will also conduct an initial screening for job services. Customers may also be referred to a counselor in the Employment Planning Unit who can refer them to support services and can also assist them with referrals and placement with employers. JTPA Title II intake is conducted by a Regional Workforce Board staff person who comes to the center twice a week. These services are conducted primarily by EASTCONN staff.

The Willimantic Career Center, like all *Connecticut Works* Centers, uses an "inverted pyramid" service delivery system. Under this service delivery concept, most individuals receive largely self-directed job search and career development, a smaller number of people participate in group activities, and the fewest number of individuals receive one-on-one counseling or intensive education and training services. Self-access and group services are essential elements of the system, in order to achieve universal access and maximize customer choice. At the same time, staff time is freed up, so that staff can spend more time with those customers with special needs.

Core Services. "Core services" at the Willimantic Center are available to the general public at no cost. Core services include all of the self- services at the Center, including access to labor market information, reference materials, and job listings. Self service areas are located in two places in the Center. To one side of the public entry, there is a small Job Bank area where individuals can access electronic job listings. Most of the other self-service offerings can be accessed in the Career Development Center, a larger area on the other side of the One-Stop facility. The Career Center is staffed by "resource persons" from CTDOL, Windham Regional Community Council and interns from Quinebaug Valley Community-Technical College. These staff help customers find information on jobs, careers, and education and training providers. Materials available in the Resource Library, which is located in the Career Center, include the following:

- Reference materials on companies;

- Materials on resume writing and job search strategies;
- Newspapers and trade magazines containing job listings.

The following self-access or guided services are also available to the general public in the Career Service Center:

- Use of personal computers in the Career Services Center;
- Access to free fax machines for contacting employers;
- Access to the telephone bank for contacting employers;
- Assistance with writing resumes and cover letters;
- Assistance using the Talent Bank;
- On-line and printed labor market information;
- Information on scholarships and career training; and
- Information on and referrals to other community resources.

In addition to the self-service options described above, a variety of group activities and workshops are available to all Center customers. All job seekers are invited or required to attend a regularly scheduled orientation session which takes approximately forty-five to fifty minutes. Staff provide information about the range of services available, and special activities that are scheduled for the month. All customers who have attended an orientation session can attend a variety of on-site workshops at the Center. Workshops and seminars offered at the Center to the general public include:

- *Managing Change.* This seminar is primarily designed to assist persons deal with changes associated with job loss. Seminars emphasize various aspects of financial planning.
- *Discovering Future Employment Goals.*
- *Resume Writing.* This workshop addresses the various forms of resumes (e.g., chronological, functional) and techniques of effective resume writing. Those persons who are not clear on their job objectives are encouraged to first meet with a Career Development Specialist or to attend the *Discovering Future Employment Goals* Workshop.
- *Follow-up Resume Seminar.* This seminar is intended to review the first draft of the resume and leads to a completed resume.
- *Job Leads.* The objective of the workshop is to help customers find alternative ways to find jobs leads, and emphasizes the “hidden job market” and finding job openings before they are publicized.

- Mini-resumes. Workshops participants learn to prepare mini-resumes modeled on the proprietary “Jist” card. These 3 x 5 cards contain a compressed version of the job seeker’s skills and experiences that can be given to potential employers or used as interview “scripts.” All workshop attendees must have a completed resume before attending.
- *Dialing for Dollars*. This workshop teaches the various techniques involved with contacting employers by telephone. It is intended to help job seekers overcome “phone fear,” reach those persons with the authority to hire, and set up interviews.
- *Interviewing Techniques*. Customers learn the elements of effective job interviewing. The workshop offers tips on how to answer common interview questions, and learning how to “sell” oneself on the job market.
- *Education and Employment Workshop*. Offered on a monthly basis by the State Department of Education (SDE), this workshop focuses mainly on financial aid opportunities for individual seeking further education.
- *Surviving the Workplace*. Designed primarily for workers with little or no job experience, this workshops offers tip on keeping a job. Facilitators describe the qualities that employers seek in their workers, and how to deal with the stresses that new employees might encounter at the workplace.
- *Workshop for Older Workers*. Offered by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), this workshops deals with various facets of the job search and overcoming age barriers.

Education and training services available to customers at the Willimantic Connecticut Works Center include the following:

- Basic Skills, English as a Second Language (ESL), General Equivalency Diploma (GED), External High School Diploma services are available by referral to Adult Education.
- Entrepreneurial Seminars are currently offered at the Center.
- Technical and Occupational Skills. Individual Enrollment Training is available for JTPA-eligible customers.
- Classroom Training.
- Certificate Programs.
- On-the-job-training is accessible to eligible customers from an on-site service provider.

Services for Employer Customers

Under the previous system, Willimantic described a situation in which employers were “bombarded by different agencies” advocating for one individual. Partners now approach job development as a coordinated effort. For example, the Windham Regional Community Council’s JTPA job placement staff at the center coordinate employer outreach efforts with CTDOL’s Business Services Unit and the Regional Workforce Development Board staff. In addition, since the evaluation visit, several staff from the State Department of Community and Economic Development have co-located at the center to provide services to employers through a consolidated Business Services Unit.

CUSTOMER RESPONSE

Individuals

The majority of the nine customers interviewed in a focus group had received dislocated worker services. Nearly unanimously, they expressed a high level of appreciation for the services they received and for the caring attitude of the center’s staff. One respondent emphasized the fact that the staff “felt like family” and was “always available to her,” and this comment received many nods of agreement. Another customer who lost her job of 25 years due to a large-scale downsizing said, “It was unbelievable coming in here. I was amazed by all the help available. They’re so friendly and make you feel like you’re really a valuable human being. They really care about building your self-esteem.”

Satisfaction was especially high among customers who had previous experience with the “unemployment office.” One respondent in particular, had been laid off several times, and had collected unemployment insurance at various times since 1980. He characterized his experiences as follows:

On my first trips to the unemployment office staff were impolite, rude, terse, and acting like they were doing you a favor. I noticed a difference starting in about 1990. This experience was much nicer than before, but I still wouldn’t call their attitude like family. Things really started changing here around mid-1995. I came back here about five years later, in May 1995. The people at the desk were nicer. Dealing with the staff felt really felt tremendous.

What a difference a few years make! I attended workshops on resume writing. There were now individual appointments. They helped me dissect my resume,

and made a lot of suggestions about how I could get back into teaching. The people here taught me about writing a functional resume. This works much better for someone like me—a chronological resume doesn't look so good for someone who has been unemployed as much as I have. I've sent out 100 letters and gotten 10 responses back. . .

The people here have been really been working to change the image of CTDOL. People here have a whole different attitude than before. I don't feel intimidated now. Before, I just wanted to get in and out as quickly as possible. Now I feel the staff are really working together—they all really *want* to get you a job. That's a really big difference.

Only one customer offered any critical comments. She maintained that the center did not do enough to meet her needs as a parent. According to this person:

I have two issues about this process. I have to be with my daughter while I'm looking for work. I need to find child care, but I find myself in a confrontational loop. The Career Center needs to be more "family-friendly." There's no allocation for child care. That would really be compassionate and caring. It'd also be nice if we could have a coffee pot available, so we could drink coffee when we came in.

Employers

Center staff were unable to schedule a focus group with employers.

ASSESSMENT AND LESSONS LEARNED

The experiences of the Willimantic center suggest that a profound change in the philosophy of delivering employment and training services is underway. Staff and individual customers that had experience with the former system suggest that enormous improvements have occurred, first as a result of a statewide reorganization of service delivery and the One-Stop initiative that occurred shortly thereafter. Staff and customers described the former system as "rule-based" and "lock-step." Several individuals remarked on how unfriendly staff in the old CTDOL offices were, and contrasted these attitudes toward the customer-oriented attitudes that they had encountered more recently, particularly in the period after One-Stop implementation.

Similarly, according to local staff, One-Stop implementation has produced important changes in their attitude toward customers, who they now view, in the words

of one key respondent as “whole persons” rather than as a “client” of particular programs. According to this person, the Willimantic *Connecticut Works* is no longer the “doom spot” that the old CTDOL office used to be: “Customers feel good about coming in here now. They view it as a place to develop their resume and do research on employment and training opportunities.” Staff morale has also risen greatly as a result of the changes prompted under One-Stop implementation. “Before you could only tell a person they were not eligible for services,” said one staffer. “Now we can present them with an entire range of offerings that are open to the public.”

The Willimantic center does however face some substantial challenges. Because One-Stop funding was used to support many of the universal services offered—such as phone banks, faxes, mailing, updating materials in the resource room, and some of the group workshops—it is unclear the extent to which the center will be able to support all of these activities once the One-Stop implementation period is finished. This is particularly important in terms of the availability of workshops, many of which are usually full. Despite these problems, most staff were enthusiastic in their response to One-Stop implementation, which they view as having validated their new customer-oriented approach.

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