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SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

**WOOD COUNTY EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTER  
BOWLING GREEN, OHIO**

**One-Stop Profile**

January, 1997

Based on a Site Visit Conducted During August, 1996

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# WOOD COUNTY EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTER BOWLING GREEN, OHIO

## One-Stop Profile

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# **WOOD COUNTY EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTER BOWLING GREEN, OHIO**

## **One-Stop Profile**

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### **DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL CONTEXT**

Ohio has allowed local areas to define their own One-Stop system boundaries and develop their own One-Stop governance structures. In northwestern Ohio, workforce development and human service agencies in Wood and Lucas Counties have formed a two-county “One-Stop System.” These two counties also constitute a two-county JTPA service delivery area. The two counties combined have a labor force of just over 300,000. Lucas County includes Toledo, a large ethnically diverse urban center, and its more affluent suburban environs. Wood County, with an area of about 620 square miles, is predominantly rural. Most Wood County residents live in small villages and towns surrounded by wheat and soybean fields. Bowling Green, the county seat, is also the largest town in Wood County with a population of just over 28,000 people.

At the time of the site visit, two service sites within the local One-Stop system had been designated by the state as One-Stop career centers and had received implementation grant funds to support their transformation efforts. These included the Lucas County One-Stop Employment Resource Center—housed in the Toledo Employment Service Office—and the Wood County Employment Resource Center—housed in the Wood County Justice Center, five miles from Bowling Green. Since the time of the site visit, an Ohio Bureau of Employment Services’ Customer Service Center<sup>1</sup> located near the Toledo airport—about fifteen miles from the center of Toledo—has also received official designation from the state as a One-Stop career center. Additional service sites operated by the various employment, training, and human service agencies and organizations participating in the local One-Stop initiative

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<sup>1</sup> Customer Service Centers are sites sponsored by the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services (OBES) for the integration of ES and UI staffing and services. Additional workforce development agencies are often invited to co-locate at Customer Service Centers. Local areas are required by the state to involve OBES Customer Service Centers in local One-Stop systems. Individual Customer Service Centers may also request official designation as One-Stop centers, if they meet the qualifications.

are also considered part of the local One-Stop system. The Wood County Employment Resource Center is the primary focus of this profile.

Several key factors have influenced the development of the Lucas and Wood County One-Stop system. These include: (1) a shift in the local economic base from basic manufacturing to the service and information sectors; (2) the fact that older experienced workers have experienced a disproportionate share of the impacts of these economic dislocations; and (3) difficulties making services accessible to residents of the two-county area, as a result of limited public transportation. In combination, these factors have caused One-Stop agency partners in Lucas and Wood counties to attempt to make significant improvements in how services are provided to unemployed and welfare-dependent residents within the emerging One-Stop Center System.

- *A shift in the local economic base from basic manufacturing to the service and information sectors.* Once the hub of auto and auto supply manufacturing industries, some of the larger manufacturing employers in Toledo and the surrounding area are being replaced by small firms that employ 50 to 100 persons. Although overall unemployment rates are currently low, the two counties have also been affected by layoffs and closures at aerospace and defense manufacturing facilities. Increased automation, intended to increase competitiveness at the firm level, has also contributed to corporate downsizing and layoffs. Although manufacturing concerns still employ about 11,000 workers locally, the major growth industries are the production of services as well as local and state government. Wood County's largest employer is Bowling Green State University. To adjust to these structural shifts, residents need good information about labor market trends, occupational choices, and education, training, and employment opportunities. Despite the sizable pool of dislocated workers, employers say they need assistance finding qualified job applicants in the tight labor market.
- *Older experienced workers have experienced a disproportionate impact of these economic dislocations.* Individuals dislocated as a result of the decline of the manufacturing sector are not as likely to be hired into emerging sectors due to age discrimination, limited education, and other factors. They tend to be unemployed longer than those dislocated from other industries; most are in their mid-forties, they often lack a high school education and the skills which could qualify them for employment in the information and service industries. The employment practices of firms in new and emerging firms also leads to limited opportunities for the reemployment of dislocated workers. Firms are working existing employees longer hours and attempting to increase productivity and stabilize their existing workforces rather than hiring

new workers. As a result of these trends, a wide variety of local residents, from skilled to unskilled workers, need assistance obtaining financial, social, and employment services.

- *Difficulties making services accessible to residents of the two-county area.* The centralized physical location of employment, training and social services providers has made it difficult for individuals to access to the services that could make them employable. An aging and inadequate transportation system throughout the two-county area contributes to the problem of accessing services. In Wood County, for example, which has no public transportation system, almost 20% of the population must use transportation alternatives to a private car. In the absence of mass transit, local One-Stop partners plan to make services more accessible to local residents by maintaining multiple service sites dispersed throughout the service area—connected through electronic linkages and a “no wrong door” policy.

Lucas and Wood County’s One-Stop vision was strongly influenced by its assessment of the mismatch between labor market needs and residents’ skills as well as by the direct feedback from customers on service gaps in an SDA-wide survey conducted in 1994. The local vision is very similar to the state’s: the One-Stop system must be customer-driven, effectively address the needs of the future workforce and the universal customer (defined as new labor market entrants, incumbent, and transitional workers), and serve the employment and training needs of the counties’ employers. Local One-Stop planners say that services must be comprehensive, integrated, holistic, timely, simple and of high quality, and offered by staff who are well-trained, professional, courteous and responsive. The director of the Toledo Area PIC also indicated that the vision would evolve as the system expanded and its goals were further clarified. This respondent also emphasized that expanded technological linkages will allow *all* agencies and organizations to have equal access to the One-Stop system, whether or not they are participating partners.

### **ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE OF THE LOCAL ONE-STOP INITIATIVE**

*Local Level Organization and Governance.* Early on, the state of Ohio emphasized that potential applicants for local One-Stop System implementation grants should develop their local designs based on the requirements of the local labor market and the perceived needs of their varied local partners. State policymakers emphasized that “flexibility” and “local design” were keys to developing a workable local system. Although Ohio’s long-term goal is to establish thirty local One-Stop systems, each with

at least one qualifying One-Stop center, the establishment of system boundaries was also left to the discretion of local grant applicants. Wood and Lucas Counties elected to apply for One-Stop implementation grants as a single One-Stop System, since they are contiguous counties, part of the same JTPA service delivery area (SDA), and each County had already developed functioning relationships with a wide range of agency partners.

The local governance system for the Lucas/Wood County One-Stop system generally mirrors Ohio's state-level One-Stop decision-making structure. A Lucas/Wood County Governance Council oversees system development and has created formal Workgroups to develop designated aspects of the local One-Stop system. Local partners decided to create a new governmental structure rather than use an existing policy board—such as the local Private Industry Council—to ensure that each partner has an equal voice in discussing and making decisions on those issues which affect all partners.

The local Governance Council is comprised of all the participating partners that have a full-time or part-time on-site presence at one of the local One-Stop Employment Resource Centers (ERCs). Additional members include representatives from stakeholder entities such as the County Commissioners, employer and economic development groups, the union representing some state employees, and managers of **the** local Ohio Bureau of Employment Services (OBES) offices. Local system partners are expected to participate fully in the implementation and continuing improvement of the operations, administration, monitoring, and evaluation of the One-Stop centers. They are also expected to help attain the benchmarks and goals which the state establishes for local One-Stop systems.

The Governance Council generally attends to the provision of universal or core One-Stop services to the “Universal Customer.” According to Ohio's design, the responsibilities of local governance bodies include (1) ensuring that its One-Stop system is implemented in accordance with the local and state agreements, (2) ensuring that performance standards are achieved for specific outcomes, (3) overseeing the management of each One-Stop center; (4) assisting in the development and approval of local agreements among all partners, and (5) providing local budget oversight. The Governance Council's decisions are made by consensus. Council decisions are usually based upon the recommendations made by Workgroups that develop recommended plans of action on a variety of specific One-Stop implementation issues. The

Governance Council is required to meet bimonthly, disseminate its minutes to all the Workgroups and submit written quarterly reports to the One-Stop Committee of the GHRIC.

The Toledo Area Private Industry Council (PIC) provides key support functions to the local Governance Council. The PIC is the signatory and fiscal agency for the local One-Stop implementation grant. It also provides staffing for the Council, submits reports to the Council's Finance Workgroup and ensures financial accountability for the grant, and is responsible for monitoring One-Stop implementation progress and submitting periodic progress reports on the grant to the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services, which is the state agency responsible for administering the local implementation grants.

The Workgroups established by the Council are intended to research and then make recommendations to the Governance Council relative to their stated responsibilities. Each member of the Governance Council must be either a chair or a member of at least one Workgroup. Workgroups currently consist of: Management Information Services, Training and Capacity Building, and Marketing and Finance. Separate Workgroups discuss design and operational issues relevant to the individual Lucas and Wood County ERCs. Part-way through the initial implementation year, several additional Workgroups were disbanded as separate entities and their functions were merged with the functions of other Workgroups or the full Council.

One-Stop Center Managers are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the designated One-Stop Centers and for implementing Workgroup Action Plans approved by the Governance Council. Center Managers are also responsible for implementing training, capacity building, monitoring, and evaluation procedures, as well as providing information on center operations to the Council's Workgroups. The center manager for the Lucas County ERC—called a Facilitator—is a PIC employee. The Wood County ERC is co-managed by senior staff members from the Toledo PIC and the Wood County Department of Human Services.

Half-way through the first year of operations of the local One-Stop system, a half-day retreat was held to give partners an opportunity to discuss their progress and suggest modifications to the local governance system, as well as provide an opportunity to assess the strength of partner agencies' commitment to the One-Stop system. One identified problem was the slowness of the decision-making process. To shorten the

time needed to make and implement One-Stop decisions, the partners attending the retreat agreed to eliminate a separate Administrative Workgroup and merge its membership into the full Governance Council. Under the new system, Workgroups can make recommendations to the full Council and implement their Action Plans as soon as they are approved by the Governance Council.

Many respondents identified “consensus building” and “eliminating turfism” as key implementation challenges facing the local One-Stop system. However, most partners indicated that the One-Stop structure for collaboration, despite its slowness, still is preferable to other governance options. The acting director of the PIC indicated that the decision by the local partners to continue the partnerships for a second year—even though sites receiving first year One-Stop implementation grants will not be eligible to receive continuation funding from the state—is proof that the commitment to the One-Stop System “way of doing things” is still very strong.

*Participating Local Agencies.* Ohio’s One-Stop guidelines require that local partners must include the agencies responsible for all DOL-funded programs. In addition, agencies responsible for three out of four additional programs (welfare-to-work, vocational education, adult basic education, and public two-year colleges) must be included in order to compete for a DOL One-Stop grant, or to be designated as a One-Stop center. In the Lucas and Wood County One-Stop system, all core partners are required to out-station staff at the designated One-Stop centers at least part-time. Partners also maintain “home sites” at their own facilities. Mandatory and other partners serving customers at both ERCs have been cross-trained. This allows them to assist customers in accessing One-Stop information services, to understand more about the eligibility requirements for their partner agencies, and to make good referrals.

At the Wood County Employment Resource Center, partners have emphasized the importance of referring customers to the appropriate agency or organization. Part-time co-location is viewed as a tool to ensure that appropriate referrals are made as well as an opportunity to provide direct customer services. Representatives of all the mandatory programs are on-site at least once a week—on Wednesdays for a minimum of four hours; on other weekdays they may be contacted for appointments at their home sites. Representatives of additional non-mandatory program partners also visit the One-Stop site, but less frequently. They may also be reached at their home sites for appointments.

Agencies participating in the Wood County Employment Resources Center are described below, along with a brief summary of their program responsibilities and roles within the One-Stop center.

- *Ohio Bureau of Employment Services (OBES)*. OBES is the state's lead agency for the One-Stop initiative. OBES maintains a home site in a central location in Bowling Green. OBES Customer Service Representatives responsible for ES and UI have been cross-trained and are able to assist customers with both programs. On Wednesdays, an OBES Customer Service Representative visits the Wood County ERC where he/she provides on-site registration for Unemployment Insurance, Employment Services, JTPA Title III, and Veterans Employment Services.
- *Green Thumb, the service provider for Senior Community Service Employment Program, Title V, Older Americans Act*. During the first year of One-Stop implementation in Lucas and Wood County, Green Thumb assigned a staff person on-site at the Wood County ERC only on Wednesdays. However, during the second year of One-Stop operations, Green Thumb is planning to pay for a receptionist who will be present at the ERC three days a week. On-site Green Thumb staff provide customers with information about their services and programs, conduct eligibility determinations and make referrals to other services.

*The JOBS Program of the Wood County Department of Human Services (DHS)*. This county agency operates financial assistance programs and welfare-to-work programs for county residents. The home site for this agency is also in the Wood County Justice Center and many of its clients are referred to the Employment Resource Center to attend a mandatory Job Club offered at the ERC. A JOBS program staff member assigned full-time to the ERC acts as the center co-manager. JOBS staff provide on-site services and referrals to center customers each weekday. On-site services include the review of applications and determination of eligibility for DHS services, including financial assistance and referrals to training, Job Club, a GED class (also available to the general public), and Community Work Experience.

- *Toledo Area PIC*. The PIC is responsible for the delivery of JTPA services. The PIC has assigned a full-time staff member to the Wood County ERC. This individual acts as the other center co-manager. In addition, he provides information about JTPA services, eligibility information, enrollment, and referral to JTPA-funded training. The PIC staff also conducts follow-up and tracks activities provided to One-Stop customers.
- *Penta County Vocational School*. Penta provides an on-site Adult Basic Education/GED class. On-site staff also provide orientation, eligibility

determination, and program registration for off-site training offered by the school. At its home site, Penta staff also provide career guidance, counseling, job seeking skills and career development activities.

- *Owens Community College.* Ohio's two year community and technical colleges fall under the jurisdiction of the Ohio Board of Regents. Initially, Owens Community College assigned a staff to provide on-site orientation, eligibility screening, and registration for community college classes. However, midway through the first year of implementation, Owens withdrew its staff representative from on-site participation since not enough One-Stop customers were being referred to community college services.

Non-mandatory partners who participate in the Wood County ERC program are not, on site each week as a general rule; however, they may always be contacted at their home sites. They include the following:

- *Wood County Work Industry.* Located adjacent to the Wood County Justice Center, this agency administers a voluntary work experience program for offenders. Employers may purchase goods and services from the program.
- *Wood County Alcohol, Drug Abuse, Mental Health Services Board.* Located in the Justice Center, this agency provides referral and assistance to individuals who qualify for its services.
- *Wood County Veterans Assistance Center.* Funded through a small local county tax, services provided by this program include information on employment and training programs and some financial assistance.
- *The Rehabilitation Services Commission* administers the vocational rehabilitation services program targeted to individuals with substantial physical or mental disabilities.
- *YW Child Care Connections.* Representatives of this agency assess local child care facilities and assist working parents to find suitable child care. Staff from this program may be contacted at their home site.
- *First Call for Help.* United Way of Greater Toledo provides information on the range of services available to customers throughout the two-county area. They also publish a brochure that lists local various services and programs including legal aid, child care, mental health, employment and training.

A third group of organizations, referred to as "affiliated partners," consist largely of community-based organizations, which do not have an on-site presence, but which may refer clients to the ERC and also receive referrals. These partners are a part of DHS's extensive case management system network. The DHS center co-

manager meets regularly with these organizations and keeps them informed of county-wide One-Stop activities.

In summary, the organization of the Lucas and Wood County One-Stop effort is characterized by a consensus form of governance in which all partners have an opportunity to participate in decision making through the Governance Council as well as in the development of the fundamental One-Stop System structure (as it evolves) through participation in the various Workgroups. A wide range of local mandatory and non-mandatory partners have staff located at the Wood County Employment Resource Center using a variety of arrangements, including full-time co-location of some programs and weekly outstationing of staff from other programs at the One-Stop center.

### **COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION**

*Communication Within the Local System.* The governance structure for the local One-Stop system affords many opportunities for communication among local partners. Below is a list of some of the mechanisms that are used to “get the word out” on what is being recommended and accomplished for the system as a whole, as well as for the Wood County center.

- *Workgroup meetings.* The required bi-monthly meetings of each of the Workgroups provide the opportunity for informal information sharing among system partners.
- *Dissemination of Workgroup minutes.* Minutes of each Workgroup’s meetings are shared with the members of the Governance Council and each of the other Workgroups. The PIC is responsible for disseminating the proceedings of Workgroup meetings.
- *Governance Council reports.* Workgroup reports and recommendations are presented to the Governance Council. Council actions in the form of meeting minutes and reports are also disseminated by the PIC staff to the various One-Stop partners.
- *Coordination with other agencies.* The DHS co-manager for the Wood County Employment Resources Center has monthly meetings with a number of “affiliated partners” (described in the previous section) as part of its case management system for welfare recipients. This provides another avenue for communication exchange and information sharing on the activities of One-Stop partners in Wood County.

A retreat attended by all local project partners mid-way through the first year provided an additional opportunity for staff from all agencies to discuss progress, determine gaps, assess partner attitudes and needs, and plan for the next year.

*State-Local Communication.* Ohio uses several mechanisms to keep locals informed about state level One-Stop plans and activities. First, the state invites representatives from its local One-Stop systems to apply for membership on the state-level One-Stop Work Teams. In a few instances, Lucas/Wood County partners have been able to take advantage of this opportunity. For example, the state Human Resources Work Team includes two members from the Lucas and Wood County Capacity Building Workgroup.

Second, to provide an opportunity for local One-Stop systems to share their experiences with other local areas, the state One-Stop Management team has sponsored several “Partners Helping Partners” conferences designed to share information and best practices among the One-Stop implementation sites. The state plans to sponsor more such information sharing conferences as new sites come on line.

Third, as described in the state profile, the state Management Team also publishes a monthly newsletter, “The One-Stop Link.” The purpose of the newsletter is to inform state and local level partners and stakeholders on progress of the One-Stop systems as well as to report on state level activities and accomplishments. Although local respondents agreed that they are well-informed about local activities, several commented that they would appreciate having a more consistent and reliable mechanism to keep informed about state One-Stop plans and activities.

## **DESIGN OF THE LOCAL ONE-STOP INITIATIVE**

### **Evolution and General Description of Local Design**

Local planning for improved system coordination and integration began in 1994, when representatives from a number of local agencies met to develop applications for Governor’s Reserve Funds for JTPA Special Projects and OBES-sponsored UI Collaboration Grants to establish “one-stop shops” for dislocated workers. The Toledo Area Private Industry Council (PIC) acted as the convener of an interagency team to develop each county’s grant applications. To plan for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to the delivery of services to dislocated workers, staff in each county assessed the skills and requirements of the local work force in relation to the needs of existing employers as well projected new employment opportunities.

Wood County agencies also built on their experiences developing an inter-agency human resources case management network for individuals receiving assistance from the welfare system. As part of this case management system, a variety of human service-related agencies had begun meeting on a monthly basis to foster mutual referrals and overall coordination efforts. In addition, JOBS and Wood County JTPA were co-located in what is now the Wood County Employment Resource Center. In that partnership, they provided “whatever services were needed” to welfare and JTPA-eligible clients. As a result of these collaboration efforts, these two agencies began to develop closer ties with OBES-funded programs, since it became obvious that job search and employment services were an essential element of the services to promote client well-being and self-sufficiency.

In connection with these planning efforts, each county also initiated a thorough assessment of its workforce development system by surveying residents about their workforce development service needs and their experiences accessing unemployment insurance, employment services, education, training and social services. Survey findings revealed that customers perceived a serious problem of duplication of effort and insufficient coordination among different employment-related service systems. Identified service gaps included an absence of career development services, the need for a coordinated effort to address child care and transportation needs, and a need for timely and useful services for employers and incumbent workers.

In response to its grant applications, Lucas County was awarded a UI Collaboration project by OBES for the establishment of a one-stop shop for dislocated workers, located at the Toledo PIC offices. In mid-1995, soon after one-stop implementation efforts for dislocated workers began in Lucas County, the state announced the availability of local implementation grants in connection with its statewide One-Stop Career Center System initiative. Lucas County’s experience developing a one-stop shop for dislocated workers and Wood County’s history of strong partnerships among a large number of human service agencies and the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services (OBES) as part of its welfare-to-work system provided firm starting places from which each county could pursue further system integration. The Private Industry Council convinced the two counties to merge their interests to apply for a first year Ohio “One-Stop System” grant.

The Lucas and Wood County application was approved for funding as part of the state’s first-year One-Stop implementation phase. The funding period established for

the local implementation grant was November 1995 through October 1996. Ultimately a two-month extension was granted to permit expenditure of the grant funds through December 1996. The specific designs for implementing One-Stop services were similar in both counties. Each county planned to develop a physical facility—referred to in each county as an Employment Resource Center—that would have a small full-time staff, supplemented by additional staff outstationed on a part-time basis from the home sites of each of the participating agencies. In each county, the participating partners in the local One-Stop system planned to achieve full integration of services by implementing a “no wrong door” policy, integrated management information systems, and automated technology-based services for customers, and cross-training direct service staff to provide information about the services provided by all local partners.

At the Wood County Employment Resource Center, five full-time on-site staff were designated to support ongoing Center operations. These included co-managers from the Wood County Department of Human Services and the Toledo Private Industry Council and a receptionist. In addition, each co-manager supervised a staff member from their agency who provided case management and referral for individuals eligible for their respective programs. Additional partners would provide on-site services at least one day a week. Core services—including information, referral, pre-eligibility screening, assessment/testing, information about job openings, and job search assistance—would be provided on site or through referral to partners at their home sites. In addition to the core services required by the state, the local One-Stop plan called for the provision of tracking and follow-up/case management services to all One-Stop customers. The labor market exchange services would be enhanced by a self-service kiosk connected to Ohio’s Job Net automated system, which allows customers to register for UI benefits, review employers’ job orders, and obtain basic labor market and information.

### **Relevance of the Local Design to the Four Federal Goals**

#### **Universal Access**

Policymakers at the PIC and One-Stop center level have emphasized the importance of serving the “Universal Customer,” a term they use to refer to individuals from three groups: new labor market entrants, incumbent workers, and transitioning workers. To meet the needs of all these customers will require the development over time of a broad range of “workforce development” services to address both employer and individual customer needs.

The workforce development goal for the Lucas and Wood County Employment Resource Centers states that a customer should, "...be able walk into any community agency, One-Stop Site or Family Resource Center and receive referrals to all social service, community, and employment and training services." During the first year of its operation, the local One-Stop system has made significant progress toward that goal. Three sites, including the two Employment Resource Centers funded through Ohio's One-Stop implementation grant and an OBES-sponsored Customer Service Center, have received official state designation as One-Stop centers. The existence of multiple service locations—including not only official One-Stop centers, but also the home sites of participating agencies—will ultimately allow customers to access One-Stop services from a wide variety of geographic locations. This feature of the Lucas and Wood County One-Stop system is important, given the lack of an efficient public transportation system and the existence of a significant number of residents that do not have access to a car.

At the present time, access to the Wood County Employment Resource Center site located five miles from the center of town may be difficult for those who do not have their own means of transportation. A taxi ride from the center of Bowling Green to the ERC costs one dollar. However, when the "no wrong door" vision for the entire system becomes a reality (i.e., when system-wide interconnected computers make intake and referral possible across multiple sites), customers will be able to access services not only through the designated One-Stop centers but also through partner agency home sites, educational institutions and local community based organizations.

The Wood County Employment Resource Center is currently in the process of developing universal services. During the first year of One-Stop operations, customers were offered on-site intake and needs identification, registration for UI benefits and ES services, and information about and referral to a broad range of other employment and training programs, and social and human service agencies. At the present time, intake, referral, tracking, and follow-up are accomplished using paper forms and hard-copy case files. However, planned improvements in automated information systems will make universal access a reality over the next two years. Although the Wood County ERC provided automated labor market and job information to all customers through a single Ohio Job Net kiosk during its first implementation year, planned improvements in computer systems and communication networks will enable the ERCs to offer

customers PC-based access to Ohio Job Net services at multiple workstations during the coming year.

To achieve universal access, the Lucas and Wood County One-Stop system will also need to increase the One-Stops' visibility and promote widespread utilization of One-Stop services. Planned marketing efforts to convince both job seekers and employers of the benefits of using the new system are described in a later section.

### **Customer Choice**

The Ohio One-Stop vision suggests that effective customer choice must begin with providing customers the information they need to make informed choices. A necessary second step is helping customers access whatever assistance or information they require through the local One-Stop service network. During the first year of One-Stop operations, partners in Wood County improved the mechanisms used to provide information to Wood County residents about available services. For example, the Wood County United Way agency published an attractive brochure, "First Call For Help," that provides descriptions on how to access a wide range of community programs, including those provided through the Wood County Employment Resource Center.

Because staff at all the One-Stop centers are now cross-trained, they can conduct effective intake interviews and are able to make more and better referrals to employment, training, and social services. Current technology-based products and systems that provide customers with labor market information include the Ohio Job Net kiosks and Ohio's Home Page on the Internet. The Home Page was established by the state during the summer of the first One-Stop implementation year. This resource serves both individual customers and employers who have Internet access from their own computers or through OBES offices. Internet access from the Wood County Employment Resource Center should be implemented during the second year of One-Stop operations.

Customer choice is also augmented by the wide range of service providers participating in the One-Stop system in Wood County, including not only the Department of Human Services, JTPA, and the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services (ES and UI), but also such specialized agencies as the Rehabilitation Services Commission, the Veterans Assistance Center, and Substance Abuse Services. The active involvement of specialized agencies makes it possible for the One-Stop center

staff to refer individuals to agencies that will offer them core services tailored to their special needs.

### **Integrated Services**

“Customers do not care which agency the staff is from, they just want service.” Consistent with this statement made by one of the One-Stop managers, Lucas and Wood County intend to meet the goal of the “delivery of seamless services” using the following strategies:

- (1) *Cross-training of reception and intake staff.* Cross-training improves the capabilities of on-site partners to provide improved assessment, referral, and ongoing tracking and case management services to center customers. This was completed during the first year.
- (2) *Improvements to Ohio’s Job Net.* The development and maintenance of Ohio’s Job Net is the responsibility of the state OBES’s LMI Division. The One-Stop vision is for this automated system to be available to customers from the home sites of all One-Stop partner agencies. By the end of the second year of One-Stop implementation, it is planned that improvements to and broader dissemination of the Ohio Job Net system will allow One-Stop center staff to register customers and enter job orders into Ohio’s Job Net system directly from their personal computers.

Yet to be fully realized are improvements planned for the second and third year of state and local One-Stop implementation that will greatly assist in the integration of services across partners. These enhancements include the implementation of a computerized intake and referral system. Under Ohio’s planned intake, referral, and tracking system, information entered into a single registration form—called a “customer record of service”—will be transferable to any local One-Stop partner agency. Through technological linkages among local partners, all agencies will be able to retrieve basic client information from the common intake form, record referrals to additional partners, track clients, and record outcome and service data to be used for measurement of system performance.

### **Performance-Driven/Outcome-Based**

The state One-Stop Program Performance Work Team has taken primary responsibility for measuring the performance of the local One-Stop systems. During the first implementation year, this Work Team developed a draft performance measurement plan, which was approved by the GHRIC. The Work Team has emphasized that the program performance system must measure services to all

individual and employer customers for the One-Stop system. During the second implementation year, the state plans to establish the actual performance standards and adjustment processes, if any, and identify the consequences for successful or sub-standard performance.

In the interim, state cross-program monitoring teams have evaluated each of the local One-Stop systems that received implementation grants against self-determined goals and benchmarks. The state monitoring teams prepared a monitoring report on each local system with recommendations for local system improvements. These reports were shared with the local area and submitted to the state Governance Council. In addition, the Governance Council required the Toledo Area PIC—as the fiscal agent for the grant—to monitor local One-Stop implementation activities. Quarterly reports must also be submitted to the GHRIC. With approval from the Governance Council, the PIC has supplemented its other monitoring activities with the use of a monitor who assesses the quality of One-Stop services by pretending to be a system customer.

### **Physical Facilities**

The Wood County Employment Resource Center is located in the County Justice Center complex, about five miles from the center of Bowling Green. This pleasant complex—which also houses the Wood County Department of Human Services and many of its social service agency partners—consists of a number of one-story brown wooden buildings interspersed with landscaped areas and sidewalks. The entire complex was built in the early 1980's; the building housing the ERC was built by public assistance recipients as part of a work experience/training program. The ERC shares its building with the Jail Industry program, a program that provides work experience for local adult correctional system inmates. The building was recently refurbished to provide sufficient space to accommodate the needs of the different agencies participating in the One-Stop center.<sup>2</sup>

The interior of the building appears friendly, rather than intimidating, and is almost cozy. The reception area is located just inside the front door. To the right of the front door is the Ohio Job Net kiosk, close to the counter where the receptionist

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<sup>2</sup> For three years prior to the establishment of the ERC, the Wood County Department of Human Services and JTPA had used this building to provide employment related services for DHS- and JTPA-eligible clients with co-located staff. Services provided included GED and job search classes as well as referral to other training and employment and related programs.

greet customers. To the left of the reception area and down the hall are offices used by the center co-managers and their staff and smaller rooms used by the various on-site partners. Farther down the hall and away from the rest of the building are classrooms used for the GED and Job Club classes. The One-Stop Reference Room, also located close to the classrooms, is available for use during normal business hours.

Informational materials inside the Reference Room include telephone directories from multiple counties, daily newspapers, a job-posting board, other informational brochures, county and city maps, and a copier. Telephones are also available for use by job applicants. During the second year of One-Stop operations, personal computers will be installed in a room within the ERC for use by One-Stop customers.

Information available on the computers will include: career information, enhanced labor market information, and resume writing software.

Plans are underway to make the ERC easier to locate. Directional signs will be posted at several road junctures as well as within the County Justice Center campus. (The ERC is located on the outer edge of the campus.) A sign on the building will also identify the Center. There is ample parking space.

#### **FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS, BUDGETING, AND FISCAL ISSUES**

Ohio requires that local One-Stop implementation grants be used primarily for one-time start-up costs. Although some carry-over funding is permissible, all expenditures related to staffing must be used during the one-stop grant period. The Wood and Lucas County One-Stop system received a 12-month implementation grant of \$217,000. The grant period officially began in November 1995. The state subsequently approved an extension to the end of December, 1996.

The activities for which the local grant funding was earmarked included:

- Staff costs for a receptionist at the Wood County ERC and the Lucas County One-Stop facilitator;
- Cross-training and capacity building for local partner staff;
- Networking and computer software and related items;
- The purchase of two Ohio Job Net kiosks, one to be installed within the Wood County ERC; and
- One-Stop marketing efforts.

Ohio requires local implementation grantees to match at least 10% of the state grant amount with in-kind contributions and to describe how other existing resources

will be used to support the development of the One-Stop system. Local contributions during the first year of One-Stop operations included:

- Office space and furniture for the Wood County ERC provided by the Wood County JOBS program;
- Office space and furniture for the Lucas County ERC provided by the Toledo office of the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services;
- MIS support and resource library materials provided by the Toledo Area Private Industry Council;
- Computers, workstations, and training space paid for with the Lucas County OBES UI Collaboration Grant awarded for the development of One-Stop services for dislocated workers;
- On-site direct service staff time and planning time contributed by the participating local partners. The One-Stop-specific staff positions funded by the participating partners during the first year of One-Stop operations include the One-Stop center co-managers of the Wood County ERC and two staff assistants (contributed by the Toledo Area PIC and the Wood County Department of Human Services).

The value of the local contributions was estimated at just under \$500,000. Initially, the Toledo Area PIC had also planned to provide the salary of the Lucas County ERC facilitator for the entire grant year. However, when the agency's JTPA funding was reduced by 40% in 1996, it was forced to withdraw this support six months into the first year, and implementation grant funds were shifted from the training budget to cover this key staff position.

The Lucas and Wood County One-Stop proposal to the state indicated that other revenue sources, such as the marketing of fee-based services to employers, would be considered. Services that were mentioned as possibilities for fee-based services included workshops on workplace-related issues, specialized on-site customized training and other innovations which the employer community might find useful. The local partners did not pursue these options during the first year of One-Stop implementation.

One of the issues discussed by local partners during the Lucas and Wood County One-Stop retreat in August of 1996 was whether the participants were committed to continue the One-Stop concept beyond the year of implementation grant funding, and if so, what funds and other resources could be identified to support second year operations. The PIC leadership pointed to the fact that partners are willing to share in

the ongoing costs of maintaining the new system as a clear demonstration of partner commitment to the new system.

Local funding commitments made for the second year of One-Stop operations include in-kind partner contributions of about \$400,000 to cover such cost items as on-site partner agency staff, occupancy costs, and the provision of some staff training by outside providers. The Wood County Department of Human Services and JTPA will continue to fund their center co-managers and one staff assistant for each co-manager. Green Thumb will supply a Senior Community Service Program work experience participant to serve as center receptionist three days a week. The JTPA case manager will provide additional reception and intake support during the two days the Green Thumb receptionist is not working. Other expenses, such as telephone, other communications support, and office supplies will be prorated among partners.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL SUPPORT MECHANISMS**

### **Staffing Arrangements**

Co-managers provided by the Wood County Department of Human Services and the Toledo Area PIC are responsible for day-to-day management and operations of the Wood County ERC. The co-managers work as a team; both individuals said that they “do what is necessary to keep the Center operating.” The DHS co-manager is chair of the Wood County Center Workgroup (which includes all Wood County agency partners). The JTPA co-manager is in charge of the financial aspects of operating the center and coordinating its software and hardware needs.

Shared day-to-day responsibilities of the Center co-managers include overseeing the scheduling and operation of the Center, assisting in resolving conflicts among partners, and carrying out the action plans approved by the Governance Council. In addition to their One-Stop management responsibilities, the center co-managers are also responsible to their respective agency for program-related duties. Staff from each agency assigned to them conduct more detailed eligibility determinations for their respective programs and assist in referring customers to services offered at the center as well as by their respective agencies.

While co-managers are responsible for implementing and overseeing the One-Stop training, capacity building, monitoring, and evaluation procedures, all local agency partners are expected to share responsibility for meeting local One-Stop goals as well as furthering Ohio’s state goals. At each of the One-Stops in the local system,

OBES ES and UI representatives have been cross-trained, renamed Customer Service Representatives, and have taken on the functions of assisting customers with both ES and UI services. As described previously, all mandatory agency partners provide on-site service staff at least one-half day each week and offer off-site staffing assistance to Center customers as needed, through referrals to the partner agencies' "home sites." Non-mandatory agency partners also assign staff to visit the Center on a periodic basis, but the frequency of visits may be less than once weekly.

The center receptionist is trained to provide customers with information about the Center, assist customers in operating the Ohio Job Net kiosk, register customers, conduct an initial identification of customers' requirements, and schedule appointments with appropriate partners.

### **Capacity Building**

The state-level Human Resources Work Team is working on developing a long-term capacity-building plan to support staff in the operation of local One-Stop centers. Although developing long-term capacity-building plans, the Work Team also wanted to support staff training efforts undertaken by the local One-Stop systems that received first-year implementation grants. Thus, as a starting point, the state-level Human Resources Work Team plan to conduct workshops to assist local One-Stop governing boards to function more effectively.

At the local level, One-Stop partners found that the resources available for capacity building were not adequate to cover the training needs of One-Stop staff and staff at partner agencies.<sup>3</sup> Early on, the local Capacity Building Workgroup conducted a needs assessment which indicated that partners perceived that training would be needed in four broad areas. In order of priority, these were 1) computer/software topics; 2) operations (intake, case management, partner cross-training to enhance collaboration); 3) human relations; and 4) a partner orientation to other available community resources.

Capacity-building strategies completed the first year included the following:

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<sup>3</sup> A more substantial level of grant funding had initially been planned for staff training needs. However, a shortfall in the local PIC budget forced the local partners to transfer these funds to cover the salary of the Lucas County ERC manager.

- *Partner cross-training*, in which each partner provided an oral presentation and written information describing its agency or organization, the services available, and eligibility criteria for each program described. This training was well received by all partners.
- *Cross training for ES and UI staff* which prepared these staff for their positions as Customer Service Representatives, capable of conducting intake, identifying customer needs and referring customers to appropriate agencies and other partners.

Plans for further capacity building during the second year of One-Stop operations include improving the foundation for high quality customer service by providing training to receptionists on telephone techniques, how to make referrals, and other topics. Computer training is also planned for year two, after the new computer systems and software have been installed.

Capacity building, as interpreted at the local level, also included strategies to building community support for and understanding of the new One-Stop system. Activities related to these strategies are described in this profile under Marketing.

### **Management Information Systems (MIS)**

Ohio has indicated that each One-Stop system is expected to develop its own management information system. To support local system development efforts, the state will (1) create a new “expert front end” to simplify the taking of UI initial claims by cross-trained staff from other agencies; (2) support the development of an integrated customer information system to access and track customer information currently found in three different information systems (ES, UI, and JTPA); (3) develop support and measurement systems for the One-Stop initiative, including an evaluation and research capability; and (4) manage the information network and systems.

The Lucas and Wood County One-Stop MIS Workgroup was formed to:

- serve as an advisory group for the integration of computer software to access and share information on referral, registration, and program scheduling;
- provide or obtain high quality training in computer software applications for appropriate staff;
- ensure appropriate application, usage and maintenance of all computers within the system in order to respond to the present and future needs of the Universal Customer; and
- ensure proper confidentiality of computer records.

Early on, the Workgroup identified three predominant concerns: (1) how to address partner concerns related to confidentiality and security of customer information; (2) how to gain consensus among partners for the implementation of a universal One-Stop customer data sheet; and (3) how to create local networks to connect the three One-Stop centers and the Toledo Area PIC. A broader local concern was how to ensure that decisions made about the design of a local system would ultimately be compatible with the planned statewide “integrated state information system.”

The Workgroup’s initial efforts focused on how to interconnect the One-Stop sites and agency partners for the purpose of cross-agency data sharing, including identifying existing PCs that could be used in networking, networking systems already in place, and the availability of assistance or funding from the state. To assess partners’ views on information-sharing needs as well as confidentiality concerns, the Workgroup surveyed all local partners. The survey results indicated an overriding concern on the part of all partners about maintaining confidentiality regarding client information. The Workgroup concluded that it would not be possible to implement an integrated local MIS system until a universal confidentiality agreement was negotiated among the local One-Stop partners.

Limited funding for the local MIS system was also viewed as a barrier to its early development. Just over \$100,000 in implementation grant funds was available to support the development of an integrated information system in Lucas and Wood Counties. (This total includes funds from the state share of the DOL Implementation Grant as well as funds from the local grant.) In addition, ten PCs were purchased with UI Collaboration Grant funds. It is anticipated that local partners will provide funds and in-kind contributions to enhance the local communications network. Respondents from the Toledo Area PIC suggested that the wider community should also provide resources to access and sustain this system.

In the absence of consensus on what data should be included in a comprehensive local universal intake form, first year activities included the development and implementation of several “paper” forms. These include a Common Intake Form, a Customer Service Form, a Referral Form, and a Follow-Up Form. These forms were developed for use by the One-Stop receptionist and the system partners to gather basic data on clients and to track them through the system. A “Glossary of Terms” defines the terms, services and systems used in the intake and referral process.

Although operational, there appear to be some gaps in the inter-agency client tracking system as it is currently functioning. For example, as mentioned during the participant focus group, one UI beneficiary who arranged—through a referral by the One-Stop system—to participate in a small business development program at the local vocational school was later notified by UI that her benefits were being terminated “due to claims inactivity.” This occurred even though she had been told by the ES/UI representative at the Wood County Employment Resource Center that she would be appraised of available positions and notified for job interviews as appropriate.

Goals for the second year of One-Stop operations include purchasing additional PCs and enabling all local partners to link into the existing system to access and input client data. Both the Lucas and Wood County ERCs will pilot the state’s common data base—referred to as the “rolling common intake” and “record of service”—which will require job seekers to input basic demographic data only once at a One-Stop or a partner agency and to share information about subsequent service utilization and outcomes. Computer training for all partners and receptionists is scheduled for early in the second year, as a cooperative effort sponsored by the local MIS and Training and Capacity Building Workgroups.

### **Labor Market Information and Related Information Technology Improvements**

At the state-level, the Labor Market Information Division of the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services (OBES) is working to enhance the automated information available through the Ohio Job Net and make this information available to staff and customers in a large number of local service sites. During the first year of One-Stop operations, the Wood County Employment Resource Center offered on-site customers access to Ohio Job Net services through a stand-alone kiosk with a touch-screen interface for user-friendly access. Available through Ohio Job Net are the following automated services: Job Service registration, inquiring or updating the Job Service application, requesting a personal job match, conducting a general job search, and accessing career and labor market information. Employers, educational institutions, and other customers may now access statewide labor market information through the Internet on Ohio’s Home Page. In addition, employers with Internet access will soon be able to enter job orders directly on the Ohio Job Net. Ohio’s Career Information System (OCIS) is also available on the Internet, but access is limited to subscribers who pay an OCIS fee to access this information.

During the second year of One-Stop operations in Wood and Lucas Counties, the installation of new computer equipment in the Employment Resource Centers networked to a local server will allow the partners at the three One-Stop centers to (1) enter job orders on Ohio Job Net; (2) register customers on the Ohio Job Net and (3) register customers for agency services using the common intake process and database described above. Customers will also be able to access Ohio Job Net's automated career and labor market information on a self-serve basis by using networked computer workstations in the Employment Resource Centers. Plans also include linking other agencies and organizations through a dial in process which would also allow them to access services and make client referrals.

### **Marketing**

Concerns identified by the local Marketing Workgroup during the first year included (1) how to increase the community awareness of the One-Stop system and advertise the existence and location of the One-Stop centers within the local system; (2) how to attract employers to the new system; and (3) how to tailor marketing strategies to the different needs of the individual One-Stop centers.

Building community awareness of and support for the local One-Stop system is viewed as a capacity-building strategy within the local One-Stop system and has been coordinated with work of the local Capacity Building Work Group. To orient the community to the One-Stop System, local partners organized and conducted two "Community Forums" early in the first One-Stop implementation year, one in Lucas County and one in Wood County. Both Community Forums involved residents, employers, and public officials. Both were designed to orient the community at large to the One-Stop system and to assist residents and employers in understanding what the system is and how it will meet customer needs for employment, training, and labor market information. Although center managers and partners at both One-Stop centers were somewhat disappointed by a low employer turnout, the public media did attend the events, resulting in good newspaper coverage.

Additional marketing strategies to increase customer awareness of and support for One-Stop services can be described as a series of incremental steps to provide the general public with a sense of what is being attempted, as well as efforts to invite community input to be used in shaping the new system to be more responsive to customer needs. Marketing products/activities carried out during the first year of One-Stop operations included the development and distribution of brochures describing each

local Employment Resource Center, the distribution of rolodex cards with the center's address and phone number, improved center identification, greater visibility in the local telephone book, signs and posters to clearly identify the center location, and—for the Wood County Employment Resource Center—the installation of road signs directing drivers to the Center. Local One-Stop partner and affiliated agencies also helped publicize the existence of the ERCs. An excellent informational brochure called "Help for Hard Times" published by the Wood County United Way includes the Wood County ERC as one of a number of community services described in a series of "pull-out" page.

Within the Lucas and Wood County One-Stop system, the Marketing Workgroup identified differing marketing requirements for each of the One-Stops. At the time of the evaluation site visit, the Lucas County ERC, located in the center of Toledo, was working with over a hundred customers per week, but the Wood County ERC was scheduling far fewer customers, perhaps only an average of a dozen or so customers per week. This indicated to the Workgroup that a "one size fits all" marketing strategy might not work. Although both centers needed to increase participation by local employers, the Wood County ERC also needed to attract more job seeker customers to the Center.

Local marketing plans for the second year of One-Stop operations include: the completion and use of two seven-minute videos describing the services available through the One-Stop system (one for employers and one for job-seeker customers) and focusing their efforts to gain employer interest and support, particularly in Wood County. Planned marketing activities targeted to employers in Wood County include: (1) "Business After Hours" open houses at the Center, (2) the conduct of a *Wood County Town Hall meeting* on the One-Stop system, to be co-sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, and (3) employer lunches profiling individuals who have used the ERC and employers that have used the new system and support it. The objective of these marketing efforts will be to convince employers to make the One-Stop system the access point for job orders as well as to increase their participation in the Employment Resource Centers in other ways. Achieving full-scale employer participation has taken on new importance in response to welfare reform initiatives introduced at the state and federal levels.

At the state level, one of the first year goals of the Marketing Work Team is to support local areas in marketing One-Stop services to employer and job seeker

customers. During the first year, state developed a One-Stop logo and brochure to support local marketing efforts, primarily at the state level. However it has been somewhat difficult to coordinate state and local marketing efforts in the Lucas and Wood County system. Early in the One-Stop implementation grant period, members of the local Marketing Workgroup met with the state Marketing Work Team to identify common concerns and interests. Difficulties identified at that meeting included the use of different names and different logos at the state and local level to market One-Stop systems. The state refers to One-Stop centers as “career system centers” while the local system refers to them as “Employment Resource Centers.” The logo used at the state level (a fat “1” with arrows encircling it) is markedly different from the local used at the local level (a “1” in the center of a hexagon shaped like a traffic stop sign). The partners in the local One-Stop system decided to keep their own logo. To avoid confusion, a state-local agreement was reached which will allow local logos to be used in conjunction with the state logo, when that appears to be appropriate. For example, while the Job Net kiosks would prominently display the state logo, local logos could also be displayed.

## **DELIVERY OF ONE-STOP SERVICES TO CUSTOMERS**

### **Services for Individual Customers**

Ohio requires local One-Stop systems and designated One-Stop centers to provide universal access to the following core services: (1) intake and assessment for all required programs (ES, UI, JTPA, Senior Community Services, Veterans’ Employment Services and three of the following four programs: welfare-to-work programs, vocational education, adult basic education, and two-year colleges); (2) orientation and information on all employment and training services; (3) quality labor market information; (4) testing; (5) integrated job development, including information on job openings and referrals to posted jobs; (6) job search assistance; and (7) assistance with UI claims. In addition, the state offered extra points to local areas applying for One-Stop implementation grant funds if local One-Stop systems offered any of the following services: in-depth assessment and counseling, case management, or training and skills validation to certify the qualifications of applicants for jobs with specific employers. The state encouraged, but did not require, local areas to customized core employer and job-seeker services to respond to local labor market conditions.

The basic customer service philosophy in the Lucas and Wood County One-Stop system is that customers are best qualified to make their own decisions regarding their service path; beyond intake and an initial identification of needs, customers are expected to request the services they wish to access. During an initial contact with the receptionist at the Wood County Employment Resource Center, customers are provided with an orientation to the One-Stop center, its partner agencies and its services. Customers are offered the opportunity to register for One-Stop services by completing a Common Intake Form.

Initial information on eligibility requirements for programs available in the community may be provided to the customer by staff from any of the on-site partners. Based upon the information provided on the initial intake form and a discussion with the customer regarding his/her needs and requirements, the customer is referred and/or scheduled for an appointment with on-site JTPA or DHS staff or from one of the local One-Stop partner agencies. During the meeting with an agency/program partner, the individual is provided with detailed information about how to access the services of interest to him/her. As indicated earlier, it is then up to the individual customer to make personal choices about the appropriate next steps, e.g., direct job development assistance, further career development services.

The core services available on-site at the Wood County Employment Resource Center or through referral to partner or affiliated agencies are described below.

- *Information on jobs, careers, labor markets, and employment and training programs* is provided to the universal customer by a wide range of organizations, some of which are oriented to serving the “universal customer” and some of which are oriented to the special needs of targeted population groups. Access to job listings and job matching is also available to all customers through the Ohio Bureau of Employment Service’s Ohio Job Net kiosk that supports self registration, independent job search, and self-service referrals. Self-service information is also available in the Resource Room in each Employment Resource Center; a bulletin board in the reception area posts currently available jobs.
- *Application and receipt of UI benefits.* Initial applications are processed by cross-trained ES/UI staff, called Customer Service Representatives. Services are available at the ERC on the scheduled day or through referral to the OBES home site. Once the computer network has been expanded, staff from other agencies will be cross-trained to assist customers with UI applications at their own home sites or at the ERCs.

**Wood County Employment Resource Center: One-Stop Profile**

- *Testing and assessment* using specific tests such as vocational interest and aptitude tests, as well as tests of basic and work-related skills is available through OBES, Penta Vocational School, and Owens Community College. Testing and assessment for targeted populations is provided by the County Departments of Human Services (for welfare recipients), the PIC (for JTPA-eligible customers) and Green Thumb (for older workers).
- *Job openings, information on employer hiring requirements, referrals and job placement assistance* is provided at the Centers by OBES Customer Service staff during on-site days or by referral to an OBES home site. Customers may access automated information on a self-service basis on the Ohio Job Net kiosk at the ERCs or over the Internet. Additional services are provided to members of targeted groups by the agencies serving special populations.

One of the most popular on-site staff-assisted job search services at the Wood County Employment Resource Center is a Job Club funded by the County Department of Human Services and staffed by a Job Search Coach. This Job Club, offered six hours a day five days a week at the Center, is a mandatory service for many individuals receiving cash assistance from DHS. However, the service is also available to the “universal customer” at no charge. It is a very popular workshop and is the predominant local mechanism used to provide customer assistance in the areas of job referral and job placement services.

- *Referral to available community services and resources* is provided by the Center receptionist, as well as by staff from the local partner agencies. In addition, written materials and brochures on community resources are provided to Center customers, including an excellent brochure developed by the Wood County United Way, called “Help for Hard Times.”
- *Access to ABE/GED classes:* ABE/GED classes are provided on-site at the Wood County Employment Resource Center by Penta Vocational School to all DHS or JTPA eligible applicants. Others not eligible for these programs may also enroll. No fees are charged.
- *Self-service access to information on local employers and training providers* is available in the Center’s Resource Room.
- *Career planning and career preparation information and activities* are available from the local education and training partners. Although automated career information is available on the full version of Ohio Job Net; it is not yet accessible to customers at the Wood County Employment Resource Center. Penta County Vocational School provides career guidance, counseling and career development activities at its home site. This institution also offers a “Starting Your Own

Business Class” which has received rave reviews from some of its graduates.

If an individual is identified as having special needs (e.g. a substance abuse problem, or a disability) or meeting the eligibility criteria for special programs (e.g., veterans’ services or the JOBS program for cash assistance recipients) he/she will usually be referred to the organization or agency that targets its services to that specific client population. For example, persons eligible for or receiving public assistance will be referred to the Wood County Department of Human Services for information on jobs, careers, employment and training programs, while individuals not qualifying to these programs will be referred to providers providing the same core services to the general public, such as OBES or the Penta County Vocational School. Mandatory partners serving special populations include: Green Thumb (older workers); Wood County Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Services (individuals with substance abuse or mental health barriers to employment); Wood County Department of Human Services (welfare recipients); the Rehabilitation Services Commission (individuals with disabilities) and the Toledo Area PIC (economically disadvantaged individuals or dislocated workers).

Special needs will also be addressed through supplementary referrals to a number of affiliated social service agencies. Wood County has a wide range of services available to populations with special needs, particularly those who require financial or other assistance. Referrals to these so-called affiliated partners are made as appropriate. The list of affiliated organizations and agencies includes the Veterans Assistance Center, United Christian Fellowship, and YW Child Care Connections.

### **Services for Employer Customers**

The Lucas and Wood County One-Stop proposal stated that service to employers is “...recognized as the primary reason for the existence of the One-Stop system, and all partners view it as their job to anticipate and deliver services to employers.” The Lucas and Wood County partners have tried to orient employers to the new system by highlighting the benefits of coordinated inter-agency job listing and job placement services. During sessions designed to orient employers to the One-Stop system (e.g., community forums, “town halls,” and “business after hours” sessions), employers have been invited to provide input as to what other “value added” employer services might be provided, either free of charge or for a user fee. The Governance Council

and the Job Service Employer Committee (JSEC) are also discussing ways to serve employers and keep them informed about One-Stop system enhancements.

Universal services currently available to employers free of charge consist of:

- *Dissemination of job orders* which are posted on Center bulletin boards as well as on the automated Ohio Job Net kiosks located in each of the Centers. During the second year of One-Stop operations, job orders will be shared with all partners via a networked system of Ohio Job Net computers available at partner home sites as well as at One-Stop centers.
- *Joint One-Stop recruitment efforts* in response to posted job orders, including assessment of job applicants for new and expanding employers.
- *Availability of office space* for use by employers in reviewing applicant resumes, interviewing job applicants, etc.
- *Referral of appropriate candidates* for position openings.
- *Information and assistance* with the layoff process for employers undergoing a reduction in force.

Fee-based services are under general consideration by the local One-Stop system, but at this point their development is not a priority. Services that have been identified for potential development as fee-based services include (1) *customized training* (either on-site training or off-site industry- or employer-specific training provided by a vocational school or community college); and *employer-focused workshops* for managers on such topics as violence in the workplace, diversity training, legal issues affecting employers, etc. In addition, it has been suggested that employers might be open to providing general skill training of new job entrants in the workplace if there were financial incentives—such as reimbursement of training expenses—for hiring workers belonging to identified target groups.

As part of the overall state One-Stop initiative, Ohio is improving the content and delivery modes for local labor market information. One project funded with the state's One-Stop implementation grant funding includes the development of a "micro-occupational information system" to provide integrated information to employers, individuals, and service providers on current and projected labor market demands and related training resources by occupation. Another funded project is the development of an electronic bulletin board to share state labor market data banks with dial-up users. As a result of these projects, a wide range of information is now available to Ohio

employers free of charge on Ohio's LMI Home Page. Many employers in Ohio are not yet aware of the availability of this information. The state plans to publicize its new Internet accessibility and expanded labor market information early in 1997.

## **CUSTOMER RESPONSE**

### **Individuals**

Most of the individuals interviewed said that they had not been aware of the One-Stop system prior to their contact with the Wood County Employment Resource Center. Each of the respondents we talked with had heard about the Center through a friend or relative. Customers appeared to appreciate the changes the One-Stop system is trying to bring about in the design and delivery of services. Comments about the services received fell into the following general categories:

- *Initial in-depth orientation.* Individuals indicated that they were provided with a list of the different kinds of assistance available at the One-Stop during their initial visit to the Center.
- *Range of options and assistance.* Respondents indicated that partner agencies and/or on-site staff were available to provide the specific types of assistance needed. For example, staff/partners could assist with resume development, provide a typewriter, type a resume if the customer could not type, etc. In other words, customers felt that the One-Stop staff and partners would do their best to provide whatever was needed to assist them with the job search or transition to another career.
- *Financial assistance.* Customers indicated that they were helped with tuition assistance, applying for a loan from a bank, etc.
- *Programs to suit the individual's requirements.* Customers were assisted variously with accessing skill-based training (through a vocational school), adult basic education/GED training on-site at the One-Stop, entrepreneurial training for starting a business, and on-site job search training and assistance.

Customers indicated that the One-Stop system was different, in both concept and "in reality," from the "old" system. In the previous system, they explained, you went in, registered, and were given an appointment for a posted job, even if it had little to do with your background experience or skills. In the new system, they said, your past experience and skills were seen as valuable and worth working with, rather than something to "toss out." The partner agency counselors and job club instructor helped customers see that their past experience *did* have value in the workplace, and helped

them with needed skills upgrading, a better presentation of skills, and the emotional support needed to increase their self image.

A “sense of dignity” was a phrase often used by respondents in describing how they were treated by staff in the local One-Stop system. “They treated me like a person, one of them, not some alien creature.” “They encouraged me when I felt like I had nothing to offer.” Several respondents said that counselors were “upbeat” at a time when they themselves felt discouraged. Several respondents indicated that the on-site job club was particularly useful, because it provided group support and taught participants how to market themselves. For one individual, this meant the difference between not “snagging” a job interview—prior to participation in the job club—versus being offered three jobs. Personalized assistance was noted by respondents as being very important. They especially appreciated that staff were willing to offer them the personal support they needed as they moved through a particularly difficult time in their work lives. Respondents who had attempted to use the automated Ohio Job Net kiosk could not find suitable job matches; others responded that they simply “did not think it would have anything” for them.

### **Employers**

Employers indicated that they thought the system was “more user-friendly for both customers and employers.” Employers particularly applauded eliminating duplication of effort by having all agencies “under one roof.” As employers, they appreciated having only “one number to call” to post a job listing and request referrals, as well as a single source for labor market information. They also appreciated being able to contact the same staff person over time and the opportunity to develop rapport with a One-Stop staff member who understood their employment needs and would work with them to find a good match.

Most of the employers contacted in connection with the evaluation tend to use the One-Stop system for postings entry-level jobs rather than openings for more highly-skilled individuals. Although aware of the new option of posting job openings directly via the Internet, most still use the telephone to post job orders with ES/UI staff. They are aware that postings appear on the Ohio Job Net kiosks as well as at all OBES and One-Stop locations. They are also aware that they have a choice about whether to provide all job seekers with employer information or whether to suppress employer information on the public listing.

Employers identified their biggest challenge as attracting qualified job applicants in the current tight labor market. Lack of basic skills, they said, is wide spread, making it important to involve schools in the delivery of skill-based training and adult basic education to individuals who want to enter the labor market or make a career transition. A few employers expressed dissatisfaction with the job matching and referral procedures in place prior to the One-Stop system. In the past, they indicated, applicants had not been carefully screened and were not qualified for the available positions. They hoped that under the One-Stop system, candidates would be better prepared for the job interview, more experienced or trained in the position for which they were applying, and provided with more careful public agency follow-up after placement.

### **ASSESSMENT AND LESSONS LEARNED**

The Wood County Employment Resource Center offers an example of a One-Stop center in which one of the primary on-site partners is the agency responsible for providing welfare benefits and welfare-to-work services. As stated by the Director of the Wood County Department of Human Services, it was “natural” for the Human Services agency to play a major role in the design and development of the local One-Stop center, because it played the key role in building an inter-agency case management network prior to the One-Stop system and because the rest of the JOBS and related human-services programs are located within the same physical complex as the One-Stop Center. This close link with the welfare system is particularly appropriate now that the county will be dealing with a number of welfare reform implementation issues.

The realization of the One-Stop vision in Wood County will depend on the achievement of electronic linkages among the different agencies in this rural county. In this environment, a “no wrong door” approach is critical to ensure access for county residents who are closer to the home sites of partner agencies and affiliated agencies than to the Employment Resource Center. In the interim, the co-location of all partners at the ERC one day a week—and the full-time location of a PIC staff member at the Wood County ERC as Center co-manger—are clear statements of commitment to the development of a seamless system by the participating agency partners.

As a local *system*, the Lucas and Wood County One-Stop has achieved participation by a wide range of organizational partners, with disability-related, welfare, and educational institutions well integrated into the total program. OBES,

although the lead agency for the DOL Implementation Grant at the state level, is merely one among a number of equal partners within the Lucas/Wood County system. As a *center*, however, the Wood County Employment Resources Center has not yet achieved widespread public visibility and, at the time of the evaluation site visit, was receiving a low volume of on-site customers.

Respondents involved in the Lucas/Wood County One-Stop system agreed that—although the first year effort had been difficult and time consuming—both partners and customers had benefited from the system transformation efforts to date. Although the consensus governance procedures as originally designed were somewhat cumbersome, partners were able to make some mid-year simplifications to speed up the implementation of Governance Council decisions. When state One-Stop monitors criticized the local system for not developing formal inter-agency agreements, local partners defended themselves, saying that they had been able to make considerable progress without developing detailed written agreements.

Key challenges still faced by the local system include (1) developing a more efficient integrated referral and tracking management information system; (2) ensuring that customers have effective access to labor market information to support them in making good decisions about careers, training, and jobs;<sup>4</sup> and (3) responding to the job development/job placement demands that will be created by federal and state welfare reform legislation.

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<sup>4</sup> The single Ohio Job Net kiosk available at the Wood County ERC may not be sufficient to meet this need.