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SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

## **Framework for Collaboration:**

## **Partnering to Improve Welfare-to-Work Outcomes**

Draft

October 30, 1997

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This project has been funded with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration Under Contract No. G-5966-6-00-87-30. The contents of this report do not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Department of Labor.

# **FRAMEWORK FOR COLLABORATION: PARTNERING TO IMPROVE WELFARE-TO-WORK OUTCOMES**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The *Framework for Collaboration* is intended to serve as a system-building resource for welfare-to-work stakeholders and to guide the collection and dissemination of information about successful partnering practices. Relevant audiences include welfare and workforce development agencies at all levels, community based organizations, interest groups, elected officials, and other organizations or institutions interested in (1) preventing welfare dependency, (2) supporting the transition from welfare to work, and (3) enabling welfare-dependent and low-income families to achieve and sustain self-sufficiency over time. We have solicited the input of the key agencies and interest groups representing stakeholders in welfare-to-work implementation efforts to inform the development of this product. These respondents helped us to identify the challenges associated with collaboration on welfare-to-work issues. More importantly, they shared their perspectives on why collaboration makes sense, identifying the benefits of joint planning and service design/delivery for individual job-seeker customers, employers, and service delivery systems.

In disseminating the *Framework for Collaboration* to agencies, public interest and community groups, elected officials, and other stakeholders, we seek to facilitate cross-agency dialogue, planning, and implementation of successful practices from which welfare-to-work systems, workforce development systems, employers, and individuals will benefit. We encourage feedback on the product, and are interested in learning how you use it in your states and localities.

## **PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) and Technical Assistance and Training Corporation (TATC) have been contracted by the U.S. Department of Labor to facilitate collaboration and information-sharing between welfare-to-work systems and workforce development systems on current issues related to welfare reform.

In an effort to identify the key issues associated with collaboration between these distinct but complementary systems, we interviewed respondents from the key agencies and public interest groups representing a variety of interests and perspectives on welfare-to-work issues. We structured these interviews around three questions:

1. What do the key agencies and public interest groups and their constituents perceive as potential benefits of collaboration between welfare reform and workforce development/One-Stop systems at state and local levels?
2. What do they see as challenges that might impede such collaboration?
3. What are the informational or technical assistance needs of state and local agencies engaged in joint planning or implementation of welfare-to-work efforts?

These interviews revealed a high level of interest in and support for planned project activities, including (a) collecting and disseminating information about collaboration between welfare-to-work systems and workforce development systems on issues related to welfare reform, and (b) supporting and assisting collaboration efforts in particular sites.

Our interviews with the five key public interest groups<sup>1</sup> representing state- and local-level agencies and officials reengineering their welfare-to-work efforts to support TANF requirements provided us with the following information:

- Respondents identified *important benefits to each system from collaboration*. These benefits include more efficient use of each system's resources as a result of collaborative efforts and the ability to benefit from the complementary skills and perspectives of staff representing the two systems.
- Respondents identified a number of *different possible approaches to collaboration between welfare-to-work and workforce development systems*. These approaches range from coordination of complementary but distinct services to consolidation of services using an integrated systems approach.
- Respondents emphasized that *although the two systems have a number of similar goals, there is significant resistance to establishing closer working relationships* as a result of: (1) stereotypes that each system holds of the other, and (2) real differences in system goals and priorities, regulatory environments, and accountability principles.
- Respondents emphasized the *importance of responding to the needs of local systems to support collaboration* as soon as possible—the public interest groups, in particular, stressed the importance of the Welfare-to-

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<sup>1</sup> These groups included: (1) The American Public Welfare Association; (2) The National Governors' Association; (3) The National Association of Private Industry Councils; (4) The National Association of County Governments; and (5) The U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Work grants program in generating interest among state- and local-level administrators in coordinating welfare and workforce development/One-Stop systems.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE DATA COLLECTION AND DISSEMINATION**

Based on the information generated by these interviews, as well as subsequent interviews with representatives from the Department of Labor's Welfare-to-Work Technical Assistance Team and others, SPR and TATC have developed this *Framework for Collaboration* to describe the benefits and challenges of coordination between the two systems.

The *Framework* places the benefits and challenges associated with collaboration in the context of three different stages of the process: (1) planning and organizing coordinated or integrated systems; (2) designing and delivering services through coordinated systems; and (3) improving customer outcomes as a result of coordinated planning and service delivery (see Exhibits 1, 2A-C). Exhibits 2A-C are intended to represent the benefits of collaboration around meeting *shared* objectives. We understand that these systems are distinct—they maintain separate missions, capacities, and constituents. However, to the extent that they share fundamental objectives and serve overlapping customer groups, there is tremendous potential for conducting joint planning and activities to better meet shared mandates.

The *Framework* also identifies the challenges that may emerge as state and local planners representing these agencies and their networks begin to work together. SPR/TATC seeks to both facilitate and learn from this collaboration process.

The *Framework for Collaboration* will guide SPR/TATC's continued project work around welfare and workforce development system coordination. In collecting and disseminating information and system building supports as a part of this project, SPR and TATC will seek to:

- *Act as “ambassadors” between the welfare-to-work and workforce development systems* in an effort to explain these systems to each other and promote communication between them.
- *Help to market the benefits of collaboration* to each system.
- *Specify the “mechanics” of different models of collaboration* used by states and local sites to support the development of more effective services and delivery structures.

**Exhibit 1**  
**Framework for Collaboration Between Welfare-to-Work**  
**and Workforce Development Systems**

(A)  
Coordinated  
Planning and  
Organization

(B)  
Coordinated  
Service Design  
and Delivery

(C)  
Improved Outcomes  
for Customers of  
Both Systems

**Exhibit 2-A**

**Potential Benefits of Coordinated Planning and Organization**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Benefits to Welfare-to-Work Systems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased availability of workforce development services to meet the needs of welfare customers.</li> <li>• Increased access to staff with expertise in career planning, job development, and employer services.</li> <li>• Greater employer participation in comprehensive system planning to meet customer needs.</li> <li>• Greater employer utilization of the public labor exchange process.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Shared Benefits</b></p> <p>Coordinated planning involving multiple stakeholders to advance shared goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased capacity to:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— plan and deliver comprehensive services</li> <li>— sequence and combine complementary services.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Increased potential to support cross-agency training.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Benefits to Workforce Development Systems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater involvement of human resource agencies and service provider networks in planning and delivery of workforce development services.</li> <li>• Increased availability of pre-employment and post-placement services and supports to meet the needs of all customers.</li> <li>• Increased access to staff with expertise in family supports and self-sufficiency resources and services.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overcoming differences in agency missions and goals.</li> <li>• Resolving inter-agency tension over roles and responsibilities:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— concern about staffing issues including redesigned job descriptions and job security;</li> <li>— concern about setting cross-agency priorities in a resource scarce environment.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Accommodating increased volume of customers needing intensive services.</li> </ul>		

**Exhibit 2-B**

**Potential Benefits of Coordinated Service Design/Delivery**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Benefits to Welfare-to-Work Customers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved access to quality information to guide career and service choices.</li> <li>• Increased access to basic education and skills enhancement opportunities.</li> <li>• Increased access to individualized services.</li> <li>• Increased self-management of career goals and services.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Shared Service Design and Delivery Benefits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved capacity to provide comprehensive services.</li> <li>• Ability to vary service intensity according to customer needs.</li> <li>• Improved ability to combine and sequence appropriate services.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Benefits to Workforce Development Customers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater access to pre-employment, post-placement, and support services.</li> <li>• Improved access to community resources to address broad family and self-sufficiency needs.</li> <li>• Increased ability to address comprehensive service needs on-site and through referral to additional off-site service providers.</li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-training staff to support integrated service delivery.</li> <li>• Coordinating or consolidating services using separate funding streams.</li> <li>• Developing strategies for sharing information across agencies and programs.</li> <li>• Preserving universal access while targeting customers most in-need.</li> </ul>
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**Exhibit 2-C**

**Potential for Improved Customer Outcomes**

<p><b>Improved Outcomes for Welfare-to-Work Customers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness of and ability to access workforce development services over time.</li> <li>• Increased skills enhancement and life-long learning over time.</li> <li>• Improved employment outcomes:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— higher wages</li> <li>— greater opportunities for career advancement over time.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Improved Outcomes for All Customers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved employer customer outcomes:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— improved retention of workers</li> <li>— increased employer commitment to skills enhancement of current workforce.</li> <li>— improved employer satisfaction.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Improved individual customer outcomes:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— improved employment security</li> <li>— improved customer satisfaction.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Improved Outcomes for Workforce Development Customers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased employment retention as a result of post-placement support services.</li> <li>• Increased awareness and ability to access family and employment support systems.</li> <li>• Increased commitment to life-long learning and skills enhancement over time.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodating differences in accountability and performance measures and objectives.</li> <li>• Developing opportunities for recognizing shared accomplishments.</li> </ul>
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- *Identify strategies suited to different types of sites:* urban, rural, and suburban, with particular attention to the large central cities with high welfare populations and limited employment opportunities.

It is our hope that state- and local-level stakeholders will find this framework useful in entering into dialogue around these issues.

### **Potential Benefits of Coordinated Planning and Organization of Welfare-to-Work and Workforce Development Systems**

Joint planning around welfare-to-work initiatives is a necessary first step toward realizing the benefits of coordinating the complementary functions of welfare and workforce development agencies. The planning and organizational benefits to both systems, as well the benefits and challenges they share, are represented in Exhibit 2-A.

The welfare system can provide workforce development agencies with opportunities to access the services, resources, and expertise of a wide range of providers of comprehensive human services. Similarly, the workforce development system can provide welfare agencies with opportunities to access a wide range of employment-related services, resources, and expertise. Together, these systems have the potential to support the efforts of multiple stakeholders planning to meet the comprehensive employment and self-sufficiency needs of employer, individuals, and families in their communities.

As shown in Exhibit 2A, there are a number of challenges associated with developing workable models for coordinating the planning, organization, and governance of workforce development and welfare-to-work systems. Among these challenges that need to be addressed are the following:

- How to promote coordinated policy making, service planning, and budgeting between the welfare-to-work and workforce development systems at the state and local levels.
- How to develop service delivery roles and responsibilities that build on the expertise and skills of staff currently employed by each system without creating unnecessary duplication of effort.
- How to promote complementary skills of staff responsible for welfare-to-work and workforce development services through cross-training and capacity building efforts.
- How to coordinate collaborative systems that support the participation of a variety of stakeholders and prospective service providers, including (1) public workforce development systems and educational institutions, (2) private non-profit entities such as economic development

organizations and community-based organizations, (3) for-profit service providers interested in marketing their services to welfare-to-work systems, and (4) employers of all types and sizes, including staff leasing and “temp” agencies.

- How to ease apparent tensions between the “work first” orientation of welfare-to-work system and the “career” orientation of workforce development system
- How to overcome agency turf issues and concerns about stability of employment for each agency’s staff

### **Potential Benefits of Coordinated Service Design and Delivery to Welfare-to-Work and Workforce Development Systems**

Coordinating the design and delivery of services to welfare and workforce development customers can ensure that the resources and services of both systems are available to customers who need them. The service design and delivery benefits to both systems, as well the benefits and challenges they share, are represented in Exhibit 2-B.

Welfare customers have the potential to gain improved access to a wide range of self- and guided-access career-related information and services. Workforce development customers have the potential to gain improved access to pre- and post-employment support services and information about providers of additional community resources. Coordinated service design and delivery will support both systems in realizing the capacity to provide improved, more varied, and more comprehensive services to a more diverse customer base than ever before.

Implementation issues that arise in developing successful collaborative models for the design and delivery of services to customers of the workforce development and welfare-to-work systems include the following:

- How to support welfare and workforce development systems in coordinating their employer services and marketing activities, enabling the two systems to work together in an effort to help employers meet their comprehensive human resource and training needs.
- How to develop expanded collaborative networks that support the participation of a greater range of public and private service providers and insure that these providers work together effectively.
- How to adapt new products and services, including labor market information, career planning, and job placement tools and assistance developed by One-Stop systems, to the needs of individuals making the

transition from welfare-to-work or attempting to move into non-subsidized or non-entry-level positions.

- How to provide effective and appropriate intensive services for individuals with significant employment barriers within a One-Stop setting while preserving the eligibility and targeting requirements of specific funding streams.
- How to balance the need to find and administer immediate paid or unpaid work opportunities that will enable TANF recipients to remain eligible for cash assistance benefits with the need to help these individuals find high quality unsubsidized paid work and achieve long-term self-sufficiency.
- How to ensure that workforce development services attract and respond to individuals with diverse sets of education and skill levels and employers with diverse hiring requirements.
- How to use technology to support information sharing across agencies and programs.
- How to develop coordinated or integrated funding mechanisms that permit different program budgets to: (a) support a single individual customer with a variety of service needs, or (b) support shared program activities in which customers of more than one program may participate.

### **Potential for Improved Customer Outcomes**

The potential outcome benefits to both systems, as well the benefits and challenges they share, are represented in Exhibit 2-C. Both of these systems share an interest in improving overall outcomes for individual customers. As a result of the increased flexibility in service planning that may result from coordination between the welfare and workforce development systems, customers may experience improved access to services they need as they enter different stages of career planning or career development. Because welfare customers will be able to access post-placement skills-enhancement services through the workforce development system, they may realize improved wages and job security over time. Because workforce development customers will gain information about or referral to a wide variety of community human service resources, they may experience improved access to family supports as needed, rather than only after they qualify for a particular categorical program. These customers may realize higher quality employment outcomes as a result of access to family supports, such as child-care or transportation assistance.

Challenges in combining the resources from different funding streams and measuring the joint accomplishments of both systems include the following:

- How to follow restrictions on allowable costs and targeted populations for different funding streams while building an integrated system that serves individuals in a variety of situations and at different phases of self-sufficiency.
- How to develop a process for establishing shared priorities between systems to ensure that decisions about how to serve customers with limited resources are made jointly.
- How to promote shared accountability between workforce development and welfare-to-work systems and provide incentives for the systems to conduct coordinated planning and service delivery.
- How to establish performance measures that permit different programs to share credit for providing a portion of individuals' comprehensive service needs.