

ABSTRACT
Workforce Innovation Fund Application

Applicant Name: Workforce Initiative Association/Ohio Local Workforce Investment Board #6

Applicant Category: Consortium of Local Workforce Investment Boards

Lead Applicant City/State: Canton, Ohio

Areas Served By the Grant: Sixteen (16) counties in Ohio, served by six (6) local workforce investment boards. The areas include LWIA #1 (Adams, Brown, Scioto and Pike Counties), LWIA #6 (Stark and Tuscarawas Counties), LWIA #16 (Belmont, Carroll, Harrison and Jefferson Counties), LWIA #17 (Columbiana and Mahoning Counties), LWIA #18 (Trumbull County), and LWIA #19 (Ashtabula, Geauga and Portage Counties).

Project Name: Business Resource Network Expansion

Funding Level Requested: \$6,000,000.00 technical costs
 \$532,185.51 evaluation costs

Project Type: Project Type B

Description of the Proposed Project: The primary goal of the Ohio Business Resource Network (BRN) Expansion project is to connect workforce development, economic development and education in a collaborative, seamless and customer-focused partnership structure to deliver more effective and efficient business services. Through the BRN, the six LWIAs and our partners will develop proactive, strategic employer outreach. The BRN also will develop and demonstrate meaningful business service performance measures and results and evaluate the overall impact of the BRN model.

The BRN is a collaborative and systematic process to provide individual businesses with a single point of contact in order to address challenges and opportunities and tap into the collective resources of workforce, economic development and education partners. It also creates a mechanism for ongoing dialogue to identify and understand common industry challenges and trends and create shared solutions.

First developed by local workforce investment areas 17 and 18, the BRN philosophy is shared by LWIAs 6, 17, and 18 currently. The Workforce Innovation Fund will allow the model to be expanded further into these areas, as well as be introduced to LWIAs 1, 16, and 19. In total, the BRN model will be utilized to efficiently and effectively serve businesses in 16 counties throughout Ohio.

The primary activities that will be undertaken for the BRN Expansion project include:

- Formalize partnerships for coordinated outreach to businesses through the workforce system, economic development and education;
- Utilize technology to facilitate cooperation & create transparency among partners;
- Strategically and proactively target businesses using data & other intelligence;
- Incorporate a step-by-step process to ensure consistency of experience and overall model;
- Provide business customers with a single-point-of-contact;
- Package collective services tailored to each business' specific challenges and opportunities;
- Provide services that have been prioritized by the businesses;
- Coordinate industry partnerships to align employment/ training with common sector needs; and
- Facilitate peer learning.

The desired outcomes for the BRN Expansion project include stronger cooperation among workforce development, economic development and education, creating increased efficiencies through alignment, reduced partner duplication and an expanded, collective reach to businesses. It is anticipated the BRN will lead to increased use of the public workforce system by employers for hiring and on-the-job training, increased quality of job listings with more high-wage positions, increased utilization of partner services and an expanded collective reach to businesses.

Through the BRN model, the workforce system will increase the quality of business services, resulting in increased credibility of public workforce system by employers. Employers will experience increased

satisfaction and increased competitiveness (averting layoffs and supporting business growth and job creation). Ultimately, the BRN will result in improved employment and retention outcomes for workers, which will be evidenced through the WIA Common Measures.

Description of the Proposed Evaluation Strategy: We believe knowing why our program is successful in achieving its target outcomes is even more important than simply knowing that it does. The implementation evaluation will examine the core activities undertaken throughout the program and the outputs produced by each activity. The objective of the implementation evaluation is to improve the effectiveness of program activities by monitoring progress throughout the life of the program; engage stakeholders and ensure their insight is incorporated into program decisions; and provide evidence for why program elements are or are not producing expected outputs.

Combined with the Implementation Evaluation, the Outcomes Evaluation will allow the evaluation team to determine the short- and long-term impacts our program achieves at various stages of program deployment. It combines numerical considerations, such as increases in the repeat use of the public workforce system by employers, with, perhaps more importantly, considerations of quality to ensure that program components are beneficial and effective for all stakeholders. Data collection for the evaluation will draw on Quarterly Area Reports, Synchronist data reporting system, employer surveys, interviews and focus groups.

Public Contact Information: Alice Stephens, Executive Director
Workforce Initiative Association
dba The Employment Source
astephens@eswork.com