NEW DAY, NEW WAY

OKLAHOMA WORKFORCE SYSTEM BUILDING AND
CERTIFICATION TOOLKIT

*"This ground-breaking initiative will help ensure that we are building a skilled and productive workforce with educated, trained, engaged and self-sufficient citizens, who in turn, will build our state's capacity for global competition. With a common mission and focused commitment to our customer, we are able to create a culture where partners view themselves as colleagues, not competitors...where value is placed on shared ideas and best practices. Other value added components include the ability to remain responsive to the customer despite decreasing funding streams, the development of joint strategies to deal with policy changes, and a culture where practitioners learn to trust one another in 'other' systems. System building and certification is **the** most effective answer to the ever-changing workforce landscape. It's not 'business as usual'...it's WE'RE READY FOR BUSINESS!"*

- Donnalla Miller

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ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This Guide was written by staff members of Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) on behalf of the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, under the Office of Regional Management technical assistance project (DOLU101A21499, BPA# DOLU121A21899). As part of this project, the Employment and Training Administration contracted with Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) and Giuffrida Associates (GA) to deliver technical assistance and training services using Program Year 2011 Regional TAT funds under the direction of the six Regional Offices. The Dallas Regional Office approached SPR about developing a Toolkit that the State of Oklahoma could use to guide local areas moving toward workforce system integration and certification.

To identify lessons learned from Oklahoma's pilots, SPR participated in their November 2012 orientation as facilitators, reviewed monthly pilot progress reports, and conducted informal discussions with key pilot staff in person or by phone in May and June 2013. The purpose of the conversations was to identify the steps they had taken toward system integration, what worked, the challenges they faced, and recommendations based on their experiences. This guide identifies the key elements and promising practices of effective system building and certification.

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INTRODUCTION

As the economy began a slow recovery a few years ago, the governor and workforce development leaders in Oklahoma took a hard look at what it would take to keep Oklahoma's economy strong and growing. They found that Oklahoma was plagued by a skills mismatch. Knowing that communities can grow if they can create an effective, ongoing talent pipeline that ensures that there are workers with the right skills to meet the ever-changing needs of businesses, employers, and job seekers, they reviewed Oklahoma's workforce development system. According to the Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development (GCWED) and Oklahoma Senator Coburn, who conducted separate studies, nine Oklahoma state agencies and their local entities are working somewhat independently to create this talent pipeline. For Oklahoma to have a truly world class workforce/talent development system, the governor and various agency system directors recognized that all agencies must go beyond being a collection of hard working, effective individual agencies and become an efficient, effective **system** providing seamless and comprehensive services.

"We need to move away from silos toward a streamlined system. Leave those silos at the door. Funding is shrinking. There is no model we're following; we're creating it!"

Gilbert Hall
GCWED member
Workforce Systems Oversight Committee Chair
Task Force Member

So in 2011, Oklahoma's governor presented the Oklahoma Game Changer, a white paper that charged the state workforce development agencies with creating "a unified State solution to employer's skill requirements resulting in the Education and Training supply meeting employer demand." To get there, the governor charged the GCWED with two broad goals:

1. Make the workforce/talent development system more effective and efficient by creating common outcomes, developing virtual tools, raising service quality, and moving more resources to direct client training services

2. Ensure that Oklahomans attain labor market relevant credentials that meet employer needs

The governor identified a key strategy to ensure attainment of these goals: create a workforce development **system** certification process that would encourage partners in local regions to collaborate, and equip them to meet these critical goals.

The GCWED's Workforce Systems Oversight Committee established a thirty-member task force to accomplish this work. The task force is comprised of several employers/Governor's Council members as well as staff from eight other state and local workforce system partners. The purpose of the task force is to:

- Create the **process/framework** (the **how**) to use when certifying the workforce system

"There has been a mix of partners involved for the past several months on this task force to work on the system certification's basic framework. We have a lot of passion and excitement for creating a system that doesn't exist anywhere. We hope this certification system we are proposing works, but need your input. Once you learn about this system and begin implementing it tell us what about it is good, bad, ugly, won't work, needs to be different. No one knows yet since no other state is focusing on systems (all the others are certifying centers). Oklahoma is the first! Let's experiment."

Melinda Fruendt
State Review Team Co-lead
Task Force Member

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- Create the **standards** (the **what**) against which the local workforce system is evaluated
- Review each local system that applies for certification and make a recommendation for certification by the GCWED

This task force began meeting every four to eight weeks in May 2012. Each of its committees (job seeker services, employer services, and governance) met at least once between each of the task force meetings. Notes from each meeting were taken and shared with the rest of the task force members so that each committee remained aware of the discussions and decisions made.

The task force began its work by using customer (job seeker and employer) and stakeholder feedback they currently had, and they gathered additional feedback as needed. They use that feedback to guide both the system certification process (the "how") as well as the standards (the "what") in each of the three categories (job seeker services, employer services, and governance).

To ensure system certification success, the GCWED included a pilot phase. There were three pilot sites chosen to "test out" the tools, process, standards, and measures across various Oklahoma regions: Southern Workforce Area, Eastern Workforce Area, and a "Big Region" comprised of a collaborative effort between Central, East Central, and Tulsa Workforce Areas. This Toolkit summarizes their lessons learned and overviews of the pilots' experiences.

TOOLKIT PURPOSE

This toolkit is aimed at local leaders who want to improve service delivery in their region, local partners who want to successfully pursue workforce system certification, and workforce leaders from other states and local areas who may want to replicate Oklahoma's initiative.

The purpose of this toolkit is fivefold. It will:

- Re-introduce your region's and all Oklahoma workforce development system staff to:

    - Oklahoma's New Day, New Way vision

    - How the system certification evolved

    - The workforce development system certification process, standards, and measures to be met

- Provide a step-by-step approach your region can follow to build its local workforce system and prepare for system certification

- Share the lessons learned so far during the pilot phase of the process

- Describe the process for applying for system certification

- Provide access to appropriate forms and tools needed by your local team to build its system

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THE DIRECTION – A NEW DAY, NEW WAY

Oklahoma's governor and the agency directors who represent the various parts of the system recognize the following short- and long-term benefits that a comprehensive workforce development system will bring to Oklahoma's economic vitality:

- A more effective, consistent, user-friendly, customer-focused, high quality service-delivery approach for Oklahoma citizens and businesses

- Efficiencies for workforce programs and staff

- Alignment among education, workforce, and economic development

- Accountability for services and results

- A maximization of all workforce development resources

- A true competitive advantage for Oklahoma's economic development efforts

- A pipeline for Oklahoma of appropriately skilled and credentialed workers ready to meet the employment needs of Oklahoma employers

The workforce system will be designed to be the springboard to success for Oklahoma's business and job seekers, helping Oklahoma reach its strategic vision that *Oklahoma's workforce development system increases profitability for businesses and increases income for all Oklahomans.*

Those partners who have jointly created and support the idea of such a workforce system include:

- Governor's Council on Workforce and Economic Development (GCWED)
- Local Workforce Investment Boards and Staff (LWIBs)
- Oklahoma Adult Basic and Continuing Education (ABE)
- Oklahoma Department of Career and Technical Education (ODCTE)
- Oklahoma Department of Commerce (ODOC)
- Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS)
- Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC)
- Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (Higher Regents)

These leaders are committed to looking at the system holistically, noting where each particular agency and its services fit into the larger vision, then jointly producing the tools and processes needed to implement a workforce system. The Workforce Development *System Building and Certification* process is designed to ensure consistency throughout the system while encouraging local and regional adaptation, in anticipation of creating a "new normal" surrounding stellar customer focus. **This new approach is called "A New Day, New Way."**

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The Need – Why Certification?

The GCWED understands that "what gets measured gets done." Both job seeker and business customers expect and require high quality, customer oriented, efficient and effective services. Therefore, in order to ensure services meet customer needs, the GCWED is focusing on measuring how effectively the services are provided.

The certification process is designed to encourage local coordination and innovation to improve customer services and outcomes. The entire approach to this initiative was designed to be positive, not to "catch" or punish the system in any way. The state is providing support to make the transition easier. Their support includes guidance (like this Toolkit), data on ecosystems (key drivers of the local economy), training, and funding for technical assistance and training by outside consultants. This workforce development system certification is intended to provide guidance, urgency, support, and momentum to all system partners to work together and to recognize them for their efforts.

Why *System* versus *Center* Certification?

Although many states are creating certification systems and processes to certify **centers**, the GCWED has chosen to focus on the certification of workforce development **systems**. The GCWED defines a One-Stop or workforce development **center** as the "comprehensive physical location that houses multiple workforce development partners," whereas they define the **system** as the "network of mandatory and optional partners, programs, centers and service providers that collectively address the community's workforce development needs."

The GCWED understands that job seeker and employer customers do not differentiate between a center and a system and that they expect good service with minimal duplicative work required of them, no matter where they go for help. The certification process will address this by going beyond certifying just one aspect (such as the One Stop Centers) of the total workforce system. It will certify that a region has implemented an effective and comprehensive workforce development system strategy that includes:

> *"The Dept of Commerce supports this process because employers need to know they will have trained employees they need when they're thinking of relocating to Oklahoma or just to be successful. Oklahoma needs an effective talent pipeline. How do we collectively do that? No one agency can do it alone. We are experimenting – that's why we're doing pilots. Play with molding a new system, one that breaks the silos."*
>
> Terry Watson, Director
> Workforce Solutions Division
> OK Department of Commerce

- A community-wide unified workforce development plan based on the competency requirements (skills, knowledge, and abilities) needed for current and future local jobs

- A common workforce development vision shared by all partners within the community

- Common goals to reach that vision shared by all partners within the community

- An approach to serving job seekers that is integrated across all the partner agencies

- An approach to serving businesses that is integrated across all the partner agencies

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Individual workforce development agencies working alone or towards disaggregate goals cannot effectively address all of the workforce needs within the community. Creating a globally competitive community requires the close collaboration of all of the workforce development agencies working together towards common goals. Further, they must adhere to a unified plan that has been created to address employers' needs for skills that are key to community growth and prosperity. Focusing only on one or two agencies that may be co-located within one building or facility, such as a One Stop or Workforce Development Center, will not be comprehensive enough. Therefore, this system certification evaluates how well all partners are working together to create a talent pipeline to help employers grow and prosper. This system certification ultimately evaluates whether a region has built a local workforce development system from all of the local players who provide workforce development services and products to job seekers, trainees, and businesses within the region.

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HOW TO GET THERE: THE SYSTEM BUILDING STEPS AT A GLANCE

The important, ongoing task of building a regional workforce development system is the ultimate goal of the New Day, New Way initiative. There are six steps to building an effective system. The following graphic chart provides a brief overview of these steps.
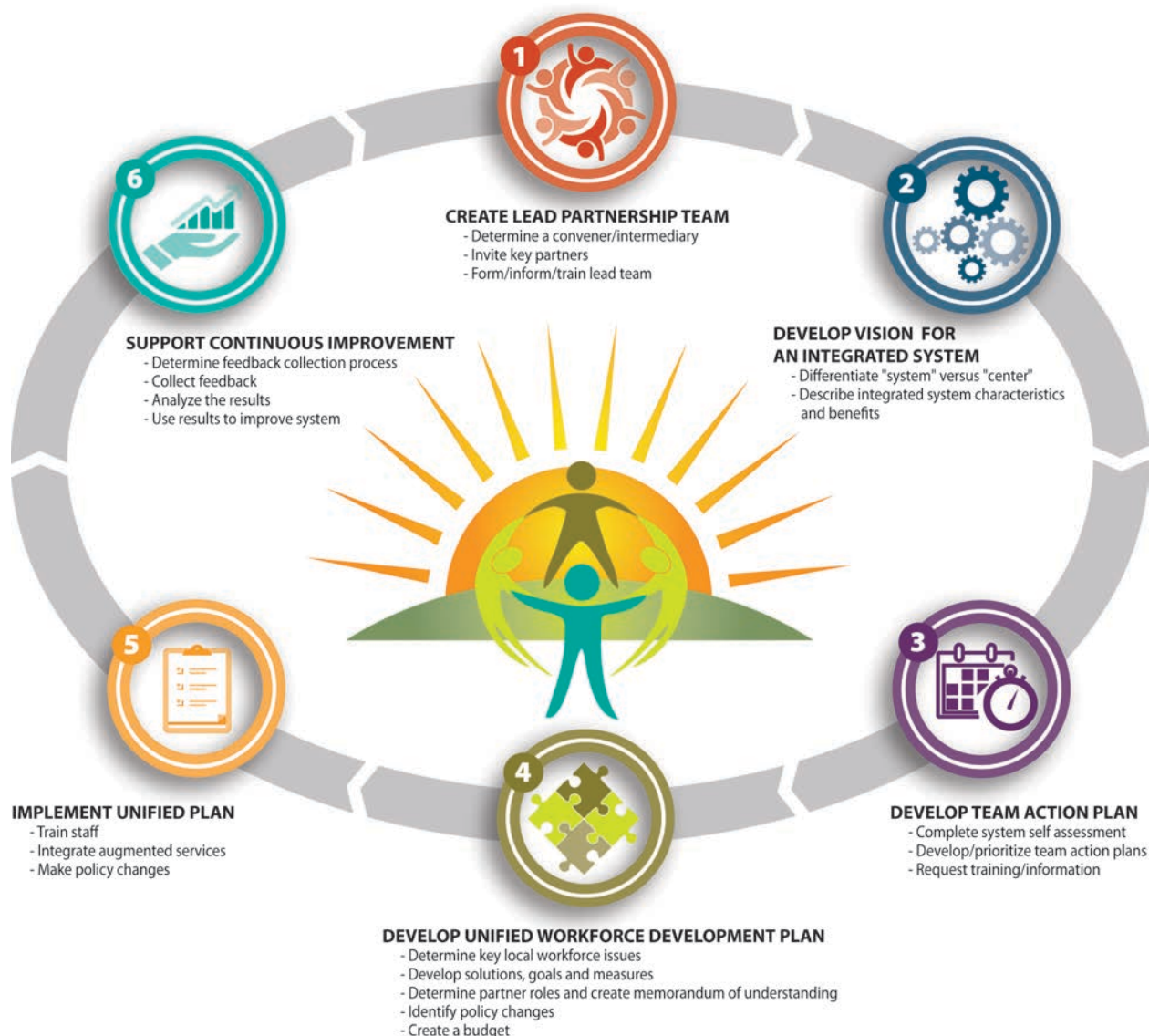
Figure 1: Building the System: A Six Step Process

STEP 1: CREATE LEAD PARTNERSHIP TEAM

The convener forms, informs, and trains a lead local team comprised of key partner agencies.

Creating an ongoing local partnership lead team committed to seeing the initiative through its development stages and continuing through continuous improvement, is the first step to building a workforce development system. The role of this team is to champion the system-building initiative, promoting it to local staff, the community, and the state. This includes ensuring that all appropriate partners are actively engaged within the team.

There are three important aspects within this step:

- Determine a convener/intermediary
- Invite key partners
- Form/inform/train lead team

Determine a convener/intermediary

To create a local lead team, first **identify a convener and/or intermediary**, someone to call together the appropriate partners from within the region. Once convened, it is important to designate someone to coordinate the day-to-day cross-system operations and collaborations among all system partners. This may include convening meetings, providing follow-up activities for the action plan the lead team has developed, or thinking about next steps to allow the team to progress. Although the local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) is listed in the framework as the suggested convener/intermediary, each local system must identify the agency or person that will best provide these important roles.

Invite key players

Review team membership initially and periodically to ensure that the team includes representatives that support key functions and services within the system. Include representation from all of the workforce development providers within the region, such as those noted in the introduction: the local WIB, DHS, DRS, OESC, Higher Regents, ODCTE, ABE, the Manufacturers Alliance, and other community-based organizations that assist individuals in moving towards employment and self-sufficiency. Expand partnerships as your group revises its activities and/or seeks to engage new target populations within the system. Once you

> **Key Members of the System Certification Team**
>
> Workforce Investment Board
>
> Department of Human Services
>
> Department of Rehabilitation Services
>
> Employment Service
>
> Secondary Education
>
> Higher Education
>
> Adult Basic Education
>
> Manufacturers Alliance
>
> Community Colleges and Training Providers
>
> Youth Council
>
> Business Representatives

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identify a newly needed partner, determine who will invite the new partner to join the team and what method will be used to do so.

Form/inform/train the lead team

The purpose of the lead team is to assist the local system in completing the six steps toward system building. When forming the lead team, do not forget to **develop the necessary meeting and communication structure** to make certain that the team continues to progress. First, establish a team-meeting schedule, including how often the team will meet, where the meetings will be held, and timelines for each meeting. In the beginning, the leadership team will need to meet at least once per month. As the team progresses, the meetings may be scheduled less often, but at least once per quarter. At that time, responsibilities of the team will have been divided among the team members, or to subcommittees of the team. Team meetings at that time will be to update the rest of the members on the progress of each subcommittee's work.

Once the meeting schedule is finalized, establish who will perform the key roles for the team, such as leader, facilitator, and recorder/historian. The role of the team leader is to lead the team to become the best it can be by removing barriers, assisting the team in creating a plan to get its work done, determining the agenda/activities for each meeting to ensure that the plan timelines are met and that minutes are taken and distributed. The team facilitator works with the team leader to establish team meeting agendas, determine process(es) to be used for each agenda item, recognize and address team members' non-verbal cues, and observe and address when the team is not following its operating guidelines and ground rules. The recorder/historian captures information (the attendees, topics covered, key discussion items and decisions, "parking lot" items, agenda items for subsequent meetings, progress, and lessons learned).

Establish and implement ground rules as an effective way to deal with the behavioral norms that evolve in a team. Usually, behavioral norms develop in an unspoken, but understood, manner. However, individuals often make assumptions about how to behave that are vastly different from other peoples' expectations. Discussing and finalizing ground rules in the initial meetings helps to eliminate conflict based on unmet expectations.

Create operating procedures in order to clarify logistics. By providing guidelines up front, everyone knows what is expected and confusion is avoided. It also can save time, in that establishing how the members will work together and what procedures to follow foster effective decision-making.

Once the leadership team is formed, fully engage them by **training them on the system certification framework**, standards and measures, unified plan instructions, and the six steps to system building. This will help members understand how working within the system will help their customers and organizations meet their respective goals and benefit the overall community. The state provided both this training and a time to establish some operating protocols at an orientation for the pilots. Moreover, it anticipates offering this orientation again as you begin your process to build your local system.

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STEP 2: DEVELOP AN INTEGRATED SYSTEM VISION

The team develops and buys into an integrated vision of a workforce development "system" that goes beyond a physical location or office.

There are three important aspects to consider when developing an integrated system vision. The team must 1) understand the differences between "system" and "center" certification, 2) be able to describe the characteristics of an integrated system, and, 3) be able to describe the benefits of an integrated system.

Differentiate "system" versus "center"

Although many states have created a "center certification" process, Oklahoma wants to ensure that true integration of all partner agencies occurs. Therefore, your leadership team may begin with those partners that are willing to collaborate, but they should work towards **creating a system of ALL the partners within the region**, not just those that are housed within a designated workforce development center. The team must help staff understand that, even if they are not housed within the designated "center," they are still an integral part of the local workforce development system. Therefore, how integrated each agency's activities and services are within the workforce development system will be part of the certification review.

Describe integrated system characteristics

Naturally, each person thinks first about his/her office and its goals and objectives. In order to serve the job-seeker and business customers more effectively, it is important to have each staff member think more broadly. To get beyond that natural tendency to be parochial, teams must **describe the characteristics of an effective, integrated and customer-satisfying workforce development system**. Seeing the elements from a customer's perspective helps the team go beyond what their own agencies provide and how they provide it.

But what does a holistic workforce development system look like? What are the elements comprised in a comprehensive system? Oklahoma is attempting to devise a system that is as perfect as possible, yet practical and attainable. The following chart outlines the characteristics as developed by the Oklahoma Task Force members and pilots.

Table 1: Oklahoma's Vision for a Holistic Workforce Development System

Governance	Job Seeker Services	Business Services
▪ Partner buy-in and support ▪ Common goals—with funding tied to the goals ▪ Productive system ▪ Invisible/seamless processes/ service delivery are for all customers ▪ System wide communication ▪ Partners who are	▪ Job seekers find jobs that they want ▪ All training satisfies employment needs ▪ All customers have easy access to the entire system ▪ Students train for opportunities that exist ▪ Customer data is shared	▪ Business-driven ▪ Based on ecosystems ▪ Provides qualified job seekers and workers ▪ Accurately identifies employer ▪ needs ▪ Business sees the system as the first place to go for

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Governance	Job Seeker Services	Business Services
knowledgeable about all services and how to easily access them	▪ Thorough assessments based on employer requirements	services
▪ Strong automated linkages	▪ Provides wrap around services	▪ Business relationships move from tactical to strategic
▪ Common/non-duplicative data systems	▪ Integrated – partners use the best partner to meet needs	
▪ Serve hard-to-serve without penalty		
▪ Standardized processes		
▪ Positive image		
▪ Accessible virtually/physically		
▪ No "turfism"		
▪ Well funded		
▪ System measures known and achieved by all		
▪ Independent operator		
▪ Able to change focus rapidly		
▪ Uses opportunity navigators		
▪ Provides stackable credentials		
▪ Well trained		
▪ Effective referral system		
▪ Removes barriers		
▪ Good data tracking system		
▪ Works for benefit of customer		

Describe integrated system benefits

Ensuring that these newly identified characteristics are achieved requires each team member to understand the WIIFMs (what's in it for me). Therefore, teams must take some time to determine how this vision they have developed (an integrated system of agencies) will benefit each agency, as well as the job seeker and business customers. Knowing these benefits to each participating agency will inspire movement towards the vision.

Some examples of benefits to a holistic system that were developed by the Task Force members and pilot members are:

"Say we have this…common data portal. I put this data in that a customer came to see me and the next day they go to another agency and they go and pull this information up and go 'well we already have this information, we're not getting duplicate information.' That's when it'll become valuable to somebody…when it saves them some time and paperwork and is not duplicative to the customer or the staff."

Cody Cox, Southern Pilot

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Table 2: Benefits of a Holistic Workforce Development System

Benefits for staff	Benefits for Customers	Benefits for the Community
▪ Staff is prepared ▪ Staff job satisfaction ▪ Increased business recruitment ▪ More effective, efficient processes ▪ Clarity for front line staff ▪ Common goals ▪ More resources at the table ▪ Happier/less stressed staff ▪ Better communication ▪ More trust of other agency staff ▪ Reduction of turnover	▪ Employers/job seekers are prepared ▪ Lowered UI tax rate for employers ▪ Reduced training costs to employers ▪ Timeliness of delivery ▪ Integrated system Happier clients ▪ Increased business development ▪ Customers trust system ▪ Health benefits (job = eat better	▪ Economic prosperity ▪ Reduced recidivism ▪ Skilled workforce ▪ Reduced poverty ▪ A more educated workforce ▪ Increased revenue ▪ Improved quality of life for communities ▪ More public acceptance of our system/who we are and what we do ▪ High return on investment ▪ Less people on DHS rolls ▪ Statewide unity ▪ Reduced unemployment

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STEP 3: DEVELOP TEAM ACTION PLAN

The lead team completes a system self-assessment, uses it to develop and prioritize a team plan, and requests training and information needed to create and implement a unified plan.

Developing a team action plan provides initial guidance to the team and ensures initial team action. To develop the team action plan, three steps must occur. First, you must complete a system self-assessment. Then your team must develop and prioritize team action plans. Finally, request information and training that will help you build your system.

Complete system self-assessment

Once the team has been fully formed and the vision of an integrated system is developed, the next step is to **complete a self-assessment of the region's progress towards that vision**. The *System Certification Self-Assessment Tool* has been developed for that purpose. The assessment tool is organized under the three standards categories (Governance, Employer Services, and Job Seekers Services). This self-assessment describes the components of an effective system through a series of indicators within each of those three categories. Using all team members, examine each indicator to evaluate the region's progress toward achieving the standards A four-point scale representing the phases of an ongoing development process helps the team assess the region's current progress from an initiation phase through planning and implementation to the final sustaining/maintenance phase. Using this scale, determine the priority for action (ranked as high, medium, or low), and mark any identified training needs.

Develop/prioritize team action plans

Using the results of the region's self-assessment, begin to **create both an action plan to finish the development of the team and a pathway towards system certification**. Beginning with the highest priority items listed within the region's self-assessment, determine the first item to address, including creating action steps, responsible team members for that action, and timelines for completion. Capture these decisions in a chart to be shared with all team members. At each meeting, have team members update the team on progress towards these action plans.

Determine and request training/information to address team needs

Using the self-assessment results, **identify the training needed to assist your region's system-building efforts**. Ask for training assistance from the pilot areas as well as from the state review team or other outside sources.

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STEP 4: DEVELOP UNIFIED WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The team determines key local workforce issues and develops solutions and a budget to address them, goals to achieve, and measures for success. Each partner defines and commits to its role(s) within the system.

There are five key aspects to developing a regional workforce development plan that is formulated, written, signed by, and followed by all of your partners within the workforce development system:

- Determine key local workforce issues

- Develop solutions, goals, and measures

- Determine partner roles and write a memorandum of understanding

- Work out a budget

- Identify policy changes

Determine key local workforce development issues

In order to create a unified plan, begin by **reviewing your region's local ecosystem information** provided by the state. The state is committed to providing this information and training for new local regions coming on board. Ecosystems are the key industry sectors that are the economic drivers of each region and Oklahoma as a whole. By reviewing your region's ecosystems and building your plan based on the information they give you, your team will be able to focus your workforce development efforts and resources on the industries that will help to grow your economy.

Ask the employers within those ecosystems to **define and validate the competencies and credentials requirements for the key jobs within their industry**. Competencies are the knowledge, abilities, and skills (basic, work readiness/soft and technical) required to do the work successfully. The credentials may include educational certificates, diplomas, and degrees; registered apprenticeship certificates;

Working together to figure out how to address these issues…becomes the basis of your unified plan.

occupational licenses; industry-recognized or professional association or personnel certifications; and other certificates. **Knowing these key competencies and credentials requirements will assist the team in identifying gaps between skill requirements and their availability within the current and future labor force. These gaps are the basis of your key workforce development issues to be addressed within the unified plan.**

Key Data Elements to Review

Additional key workforce development issues may be identified by reviewing community demographic data including:

- working age population makeup by age, gender, race, and education level

- number in labor force by age, gender, race, and education level

- employment and UI rates/trends

- per capita income trends

- average annual salary

First, compare each of these results county-by-county within the area, and then compare the total region to state numbers to determine any key workforce issues that need to be addressed.

Table 3: Community Demographic Comparison Examples

The percentage of Hispanics within the working age population in the region is 10% but only 2.3% within the labor force

The percentage of jobs requiring only a high school diploma or GED is 10%, but the number in the working age population is 25% (where will the other 15% work if they do not increase their education attainment?)

The per capita income in the region is 5% less than that of the state overall

The percentage of individuals with credentials and certificates is 20% below the state average

The UI rate in half of the counties within the region is 2.3% (indicates there are not enough in the labor force to fill all open jobs), and the UI rate in the other half of the region is 9.2% (indicates a huge mismatch between the skills of open jobs and the skills of the labor force and/or a transportation barrier that could be addressed)

Also, review the region's commuting patterns to help determine any related workforce development issues that need to be addressed.

Working together to figure out how to address these issues that you identify (from reviewing the demographics of the region, along with the ecosystem match/gap analysis) becomes the basis of your unified plan.

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Develop solutions, goals, and measures

Now that you have identified the key workforce development issues, **develop solutions that will address eco-system needs**. To do this, first ask your team, "What are the critical issues or major challenges, opportunities, or problems that the *system* must, and can, realistically address?" Choose those high priority issues your team can attack and solve collectively through the creation of new system-service designs that integrate services among all partner agencies. These solutions will include career pathways and other new initiatives and can be paid for through braiding funding of the partners.

Next, develop workforce development system goals. There are two types of goals: program goals and system goals. **Program** goals measure the effectiveness of education and training *programs* and provide teams with data they can use to improve programs and assess the effectiveness of the strategies used for target populations. **System** goals focus on the impact that the system approach is having on the overall community, as well as on the citizens and/or partners engaged within the system.

Currently each agency has its own goals defined by its funding sources and programs. These goals may be different from those of the other partners. Having common goals for all of your partners within the system will bring the partners together. Consider existing priorities of federal, state, and local funders when creating the system goals. Your challenge will be figuring out how to measure outcomes as painlessly as possible across systems, using existing reporting requirements, if feasible. If you create these common goals by defining the desired outcomes for the system, each agency will be able to reach their agency goals as they strive towards the common goals for the system.

> **Sample System Goals**
>
> - Increase in the size of the qualified labor pool
>
> - Increase in percentage of credentials within the workforce
>
> - Effectiveness of collaboration among partners
>
> - Increase in the number of support businesses to the ecosystems business activities

The next step is to **develop an integrated measurement process and tools**. As part of the process, determine who will collect the data and what data will be collected. Sometimes different agencies collect different components of the data, so it is important to make sure all partners are clear about their roles and responsibilities in collecting it. Create a memorandum of understanding that designates all partners responsible for collecting information, how often it will be collected, what each partner is responsible for collecting, and how often the information will be shared.

What are the critical issues or major challenges, opportunities, or problems that the system must, and can, realistically address?

Determine partner role(s) and write a memorandum of understanding

Once you have developed your new system-service designs to address the key workforce development issues, put the service design onto a flow chart or process map and make a list of the services to be offered. With your partners, create a common definition for each service. Then conduct a service mapping process to determine if there are any gaps or duplications in providing those services. Service Mapping tools developed for the pilots are available in the Appendix.

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A service map will help to identify which agencies provide which services to what populations and using what methods. **After conducting the service-mapping process and compiling a service map, conduct a gap analysis of the system services.**

A service gap occurs when no partner provides that service, or when one or more partners provide it but there are still not enough services provided. This occurs when not all populations have access, the service is not provided where needed, the service is not offered in the variety of methods required (self serve, staff assisted, individually or in groups, for free, at hours convenient to the customers). Service gaps that are not identified or are identified but not addressed will make it difficult for you to meet all of the needs of your customer and, therefore, your agency and system goals.

Service duplication occurs when one or more partners provide the same service to the customer or when more services are offered than are necessary within the community. When a customer experiences duplication, such as three different agencies providing the same type of assessment with a customer, this wastes the customer's time as well as the time of each of the agencies that provided the duplicative assessment. Additionally, it reduces the number of customers who could have benefited from an assessment.

Sometimes multiple partners provide the same service but to different populations or in different methods. Each may offer it at different times of the day, one might offer it in a group setting and the other individually, or one could offer it in a self-serve manner and the other with staff assistance. In these instances, because the partners are augmenting each other's services, no duplication is occurring.

Capture the role(s) of each partner that were identified during the service-mapping process. This allows your team to address any gaps or duplications and begin the process to integrate all services provided by more than one agency. Thus, the development of your system's memorandum of understanding has begun.

Work out a budget

To set a budget, first **determine what the costs will be to implement your unified plan and then identify the resources to cover those costs**. Budgets will include the costs to build and maintain the system, develop the program, and cover operational expenses. System building and maintenance costs include those to

- Identify and maintain an intermediary

- Recruit and engage partners (initially and on an ongoing basis) to form the leadership team

- Support operational functions for coordinating the leadership team

- Revise MOUs with key partners and employers as necessary

- Update agencies within the system and people within the community about the system certification

- Conduct ongoing regional labor market analyses

- Conduct ongoing regional and asset-mapping (service, process, and resource) and analysis

- Identify and align policies to support effective system operations

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- Inform legislators of system outcomes and program alignment changes

- Maintain, analyze, and utilize system measures for system improvement

Program development costs are those associated with creating new programs or initiatives to address any newly identified key workforce development issues. They may include the costs to

- Design responses to the key workforce development issues

- Design career competencies, ladders/lattices, and pathways

- Operate pilot programs

- Provide cross-system professional development for staff

- Develop outcome measure and methods for evaluating program effectiveness

After any new responses to key workforce development issues have been implemented, there will be costs to operate and maintain these implemented responses or programs. Such costs are similar to those for program implementation and include those associated with carrying out the following activities:

- Update education and training programs that were responses to the key workforce development issues.

- Implement and maintain career competencies, ladders/lattices, and pathways.

- Bring pilot programs to full scale.

- Provide ongoing cross-system professional development for staff members.

- Collect and analyze data to track program outcomes and support program improvement.

Since the workforce development system will be evolving and new responses will constantly be developed to meet the changing needs of businesses, the costs of designing and implementing these programs will be ongoing.

Once costs have been determined, work together with your partners to **determine how relevant local partner agencies currently fund the various operational and functional components of the system**. The service map you conducted earlier will help identify how much additional funding must be raised and leveraged from federal, state, local, and foundation sources.

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Identify necessary policy changes

Even if partners are willing to do whatever is necessary to develop an integrated and streamlined system, there may be statutory barriers that interfere with agency collaboration. In order to support system coordination, your leadership team may need to **identify *key policy changes* necessary to implement the goals and vision for the system integration**. Many current policies—quite inadvertently—support the *status quo*, in which programs operate in silos. Each may not be aware of what the other programs are doing, thus making it difficult to work together.

Your leadership team may want to review current state and local policies and identify those that need to be reformed. These topics can provide the core around which new policies are developed.

"After we get through with this next phase, when decisions have to be made, and the people there may or may not be able to make those, there's got to be somebody who can bridge that…. I don't know if that has to go all the up to the Governor's level or what…. They'll need to decide, what are you willing to compromise on or give up?"

 - Cody Cox, Southern Pilot

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STEP 5: IMPLEMENT UNIFIED PLAN

Train all staff on the plan, create and follow new integrated processes for each service, and make necessary policy changes to allow for integration of services.

Train all staff on the new plan

Once the plan is written and approved begin the process to implement the plan. The first implementation step is to train the staff on the overall unified plan. Training is best done with mixed groups of staff from multiple agencies so they begin to get to know each other as they learn the new information together.

Integrate augmented services

Once staff members from all agencies are trained, begin to **integrate the services that are provided by multiple partners**. Identify all partners who deliver the service, gather them, and have them establish the customer standards and requirements of that service. Use those customer requirements to process-map (flow chart) the service. In the previous step, the service mapping helps you identify *what you want to do* - the gaps you want to close or duplications you want to eliminate – while process-mapping helps you identify *how you will do it* in a way that is streamlined and consistent across partners. Process-mapping each service will ensure that the new service process will now be provided in the same manner by all partners, creating a consistent and streamlined approach.

Make policy changes

Once necessary policy reforms are identified, your local and state partners can **jointly strategize on revisions and reforms**. For the necessary changes to be made, you will likely need support from local and state partner agency leaders, WIB members, and business and industry representatives.

STEP 6: SUPPORT CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The team creates a feedback collection process, collects the feedback, analyzes the results, and uses them to continuously improve the workforce system.

The final step in building an effective workforce system is to support continuous improvement. It consists of the following four steps:

- Determine a customer feedback collection process

- Collect feedback

- Analyze the results

- Use the results to improve the system

Determine a feedback collection process

To support continuous improvement, **begin with a continuous improvement plan**. This plan should first identify what you want to know, including overall satisfaction or satisfaction with specific products or services. This will help you determine what you want to measure—follow-up or a particular point of service. You must then determine what data to collect, whether qualitative, quantitative, or both.

Determining how to measure the data includes not only who will collect it but also how often and when it will be collected. Be sure to include in your overall plan who will analyze the results and how the team will use the result to improve the system.

Collect feedback

Qualitative feedback is collected to determine in-depth information about a few key elements. It cannot be used to determine numbers of people that respond in a certain way. It is used to identify what additional information should be collected and to obtain ideas for how to make improvements. The most frequently used method to collect qualitative feedback is focus groups. The flow of a focus group includes introductions, initial and follow-up questions, a summary of the key elements, and describing the next steps.

Quantitative feedback will tell how many people have responded in a specific way. Surveys are the most common tools used to collect quantitative data. A three-step approach is used in survey collections—sending a prompter notice, distributing the survey, and then sending a follow-up reminder.

Once collected, the feedback should be shared with the leadership team members.

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Analyze the results

When **analyzing qualitative data**, you first organize the data, then categorize the data and interpret it by stating what you had known that is confirmed or challenged, what you had suspected that is confirmed or challenged, and any new information you have learned. This information is included within a written narrative report.

When **analyzing quantitative data**, you first edit the data to remove any surveys that are incomplete or have multiple answers to a question. The data is then coded, entered, and tabulated using tallies, percentages, averages, or other numerical processes. Finally, variance and reliability are determined and the results graphically displayed.

Use the results to improve the system

The results of the feedback can be used to determine the root cause(s) of a particular issue. Once you choose a root cause to address, develop multiple solution options, review them, and choose one to implement. Pilot test the chosen solution and, if the results are good, implement the solution. Measure the results and go back to the beginning to continue the process by starting again.

Each continuous improvement will bring more system credibility and higher customer satisfaction.

NEXT STEPS

Following these six system building steps outlined above is only the beginning! They will give you a good start on creating the integrated and holistic workforce system needed for your region to grow and prosper. Once you have completed them, go back to step one and determine if you still have all the team members you need and the right convener or intermediary. Ask yourself if every partner still has a common vision driving the system's progress. Review your ecosystem and demographic data to determine if you should "stay the course" or if your plan needs to be adjusted slightly or changed entirely. Make sure all current and new staff are oriented to the common vision, the plan to meet it, and their role to make it happen. Address gaps and duplications found in your service maps and revise your integrated process maps to meet new customer demands. Use your measures to determine and celebrate successes, and to know how to adjust. This process is journey and not a destination. You are not doing new work, you are just changing how you do the work the system has always done. By following this process, you are continually getting ready for what the future holds. As Kerry Manning stated,

> "System certification isn't about the end process right now. It's about whether you as a region are prepared and ready. Do you have the steps in place so that when that piece [that the state is developing, like the data portal] is ready, you're ready to go? Have you established the relationships? What is the plan? When all this comes together, are you going to be ready to jump on board?"

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LESSONS FROM PILOT REGIONS

Background

As mentioned in the introduction, the implementation of Oklahoma's workforce development system certification is an effort that was phased in over the course of two years, beginning on October 1, 2012, and rolling out in alignment with the program year calendar (July 1 – September 30). The first baseline year (October 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013) is being used to pilot the process and tools.

In order to be a pilot, local systems had to apply. A State Review Team, comprised of one state representative from each of the state workforce development agencies (OESC, ODOC, DRS, ODCTE, DHS, ABE, and Higher Regents) reviewed all of the submitted requests and chose three pilot sites: Southern, Eastern, and the "Big" Region (comprised of the counties included within the Central, Tulsa, and East Central workforce areas).

OKLAHOMA WORKFORCE CERTIFICATION PILOTS

- SOUTHERN
- EASTERN
- 'BIG" - CENTRAL/TULSA/EAST CENTRAL

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Pilot Benefits and Responsibilities

The three regions decided to get involved for many reasons:

- To ensure that someone at the local level had input into this process
- To ensure that the system certification has merit, rigor, and value
- To take advantage of the state support for a goal they wanted to pursue for some time - to streamline services for customers
- To be a part of shaping something that would impact them
- To become knowledgeable about it more quickly
- To gain skills in how to work with all partners to coordinate, collaborate and streamline
- To take advantage of training and consultant support for the pilot sites
- To train everyone who touches a customer within all partner agencies on a shared, standardized initial customer service training

The pilots members identified the following benefits that they anticipated from participating as a pilot:

- The initiative will bring partners together
- There is a need to align services to grow the economy, and this process will act as a conduit for connectivity that is needed to create the talent pipeline.
- The initiative will drive the workforce system to be more customer focused, which will cause the workforce system to become "the place to come for employment needs."
- There will be more partner buy-in.
- Decision makers will become advocates for workforce development.
- All partners will come to understand their role and where they fit into the workforce system.
- The initiative will standardize and streamline services across agencies.

The only hesitations to participate as a pilot came from their concern about knowing how to move the process forward, being charged with making a system work effectively without the authority to do so, and being responsible for a huge number of moving parts without being in charge of all of them. Despite these concerns, they all agreed to move forward.

"Why do this? Down the line it will strengthen partnerships and Board activities. In theory, this should have already been happening—this is what the Workforce Investment Act intended."

- Eddie Foreman, Big Pilot

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Pilot Progress

The pilots have been busy. The following chart displays the responsibilities of the pilots and whether each has been accomplished by the date of this toolkit publication.

Table 5: Progress on Completing Pilot Responsibilities

Pilot Responsibilities	Completed as of Publication?
Attend initial pilot orientation and next-steps training	Yes
Complete the self-assessment	Yes
Create an action plan to address any needs outlined in the self-assessment	Yes
Implement the Plan	Yes, in part
Develop a regional workforce development plan with their partners	At beginning stages
Continuously re-evaluate their progress towards certification	Yes
Request TAT as necessary to move towards certification	Yes
Participate in local service and process-mapping activities	Yes
Complete and submit a certification application	No
Participate in a desktop and online review process	No
Provide feedback on all aspects of the certification (the tools, process, framework, standards, and measures)	Yes, for all aspects they could so far

The pilots will continue their progress as they complete and submit a certification application, participate in a desktop and online review process, and provide additional feedback on the tools, process, framework, standards, and measures. These activities will be concluded by September 1, 2013. The rest of the state will begin their movement towards certification no later than July 1, 2013.

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HOW PILOTS ADDRESSED EACH STEP

Step 1: Creating the Team

Donnalla Miller - business owner, Vice Chair of Southern's Workforce Board, member of the Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development's System Oversight Committee, and Chair of the System Certification Task Force – played a key role in creating and building support for Oklahoma's New Day, New Way system certification initiative. So it was natural, in her capacity as Vice Chair of the Southern Workforce Board (SWB), that she would challenge and encourage her Board staff and partners to get involved early as a Pilot.

Staff to the Board were excited by the vision and this iniative's potential to streamline customer services and stretch funding across the workforce system, while strengthening their local economy. They had been talking about this for years and saw this as an opportunity to actually make it happen. They eagerly took the lead to engage other partners, beginning by inviting them to the state's Orientation in late November 2012. The partners within Southern's workforce centers have a long history of collaboration on projects that have resulted in good, trusting relationships, and many were willing to come, even though they knew very little about the initiative at that time. Partners attending the initial orientation included representatives from the Workforce Board (Vice Chair and staff), Department of Human Services, Employment Security Commission, Choctaw Nation, Department of Rehabilitation Services, SE Oklahoma State University, Big Five Community Services, Inc., and the Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance.

Southern Pilot Partners

Project Co-Leads: Kerry Manning and Karen Davidson - SWB

Facilitator: Kathy Hendrick - Center for Regional Competitiveness, SE OK State University

Historian: Ginger Crawford - SWB

SWB Vice-Chair: Donnalla Miller - SWB, Princess Transport

***Other Team Members*:**

Cathy Battles - PTC

JoEdda Brady - PTC

Cody Cox- OK Employment Security Commission

Vanessa Cummings - Adult Basic Education

Elaine Gee - KTC

Glenn Glass - OK Department of Commerce

Ken Gould - OK Employment Security Commission

Chris Kennedy - Department of Rehabilitation Services

Sherry Latham - Big Five

Mike Layne - Department of Rehabilitation Services

Terry Martin - Department of Human Services

Patty Mink - Choctaw Nation

Rhonda Mize - Choctaw Nation

Jason Phipps - SOTC

Jill Reyna - Choctaw Nation

Tammy Townley - Experience Works

Kay Watson - Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance

Darrell Walker - Chickasaw Nation

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At the orientation, the partners identified several others within their broader workforce development *system* whom they wanted to engage, and the need for a common set of talking points and materials (like fact sheets) that would equip them to effectively reach out, explain the initiative, and seek their buy-in. Other partners they sought included representatives from the Career Tech Centers, economic development, Chambers of Commerce, Chickasaw Nation, Juvenile Services, Department of Corrections, Adult Basic Education, and K-12 education. They assigned responsibility among the team members for the outreach efforts (based on who had pre-existing relationships) and set a goal of reaching out to them within six weeks (by mid-January 2013), in hopes that the new partners would be able to attend the first team meeting in late January. They did engage a few new partners by January, including some Career Tech directors.

Leadership for the Eastern Region's certification process has primarily rested with the board staff. Like Southern, they pride themselves on having good partnerships and a history of collaboration with other agencies and the business community. Consequently, outreach began with those partners who were currently or had formerly been together on the WIB and branched out from there. They struggled with the option of including each and every entity or representative for a particular sector, as opposed to just one that would represent the entire sector. The Region ultimately decided to keep everyone informed about what was happening with certification through emails and other communication but designate a key representative from each sector or agency that would represent their sector and participate in meetings or other certification activities. For education representation, for example, the Eastern Region has an educational consortium for the area. A key person from that group serves on the WIB board and will also serve as a representative on the system certification leadership team on behalf of Higher Regents.

Eastern Pilot Partners

Pilot lead: Nanette Robertson, EWIB Executive Director

Facilitator: Jason George, Business Services Coordinator

Historian: Connie Sharp, Program Operations Manager

EWIB Chairman: Gilbert Hall, GCWED Member

Other team members:

Kathy Adair - Indian Capital Technology Center

Cathy Anderson - OK Employment Security Commission

Ryan Blanton - Connors State College

*Lisa Clark - Rural ED, OK Dept of Commerce

Amanda Caudill - DESI, WIA Service Provider

Ryan Davis - Veteran's Services

*Charley Farley - OK Employment Security Commission

Patty Garner - OK Employment Security Commission

*Darla Heller - OSU Extension, Economic Development

Shirley Hunt - Department of Rehabilitation Services

Stephanie Isaacs - Cherokee Nation

*Joanna Jamison - ABE/GED

*Angela Jestice - Department of Human Services

*Terry Goodson - Department of Rehabilitation Services

*Tim McElroy - Northeastern State University

Nancy Mason - Creek Nation

Joey Meek - Department of Human Services

Wendi Mendenhall - OK Employment Security Commission

Robin Ross - DESI, WIA Service Provider

Marie Seabolt - Muskogee Port Authority, Econ Dev

Ruth Ann Smith - OK Employment Security Commission

*Anita Watkins - OSU Institute of Technology

denotes EWIB members

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The Big pilot area began by thinking big. They were not constrained by defined boundaries drawn by workforce legislation. They decided to configure their overall team broader than one workforce area, even though the two largest cities within the state are housed within this newly created pilot region. The three WIB directors are constantly trying to ensure that the appropriate partners are included within this initiative. One is working to increase the CBO representation, since community based organizations are the conduit to the job seeker targeted groups. Another is working within a Career Tech Center to find an appropriate team member, since the Center does not have designated staff for career development and job referrals. All are working to make sure that the leadership team members are those that can impact policy and make decisions locally for their agencies.

WHAT WORKED

Southern and Eastern pilots started by inviting those partners where strong relationships already existed (primarily those on the Workforce Board and those who were used to working together in the workforce centers) to the orientation. For Eastern, while convening the partners has never been a challenge, this system certification process has brought the partners even closer. It created an opportunity to discover what each of the partners does and how they can better support one another, network, and really leverage resources for the good of the "system."

In the Big Region, needs in the sub-regions drove them to collaborate, and now they are seeing the benefits. Although, initially, all waned to move forward individually, they realized that joining together to apply to become a pilot would benefit them all. Each had reasons to come together. One region had no physical manpower to move forward alone, having only one WIB staff member. Another area had a brand new Executive Director. The third region had long term experience within the workforce system and an interest in helping fellow contiguous workforce areas. Working tvogether solved the issues found in the sub-regions by calling on the expertise of each region.

The Southern Pilot Project Team opted to meet monthly. Since many pilot team members are also on the Southern Workforce Board, they decided to hold the pilot meetings immediately following the Board meetings when a Board meeting is scheduled (usually every other month). Given the time involved in bringing together people from across the large region and the difficulty posed by the scheduling

Big Region Pilot Partners

Leader: Eddie Foreman, Central OK WIB

Facilitator: Shelley Cadamy-Munoz, Tulsa WIB

Historian: Nicole Hayes, Tulsa WIB

Other team members:

Stan Greil, Rose State College

Ruth Giddens, Metro Technology Center

Mike Chumo, Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce

Catherine Kiuyon, Oklahoma City Community College

Cassandra Fowler, Department of Human Services

Denton Blevins, Francis Tuttle Technology Center

Erin Sturch, ResCare

Robert Green, PSI, IMCI

Renee Sansom, Department of Rehabilitation Services

Wade Jarlsberg, Mid-America Technology Center

Brian Ruttman, Metro Technology Center

Bill Hulsey, Canadian Valley Technology Center

Bob Smith, OK Manufacturers Alliance

Chad Mullen, Oklahoma Center for Advancement of Science and Technology

Larry Hawkins, Metro Technology Center

Shalonda Sanders, OK Employment Security Commission

Vicki Murray, COWIB

Tim Hight, Eastern Oklahoma County Partnership

Deidre Ebrey, City of Moore, Economic Development

Darry Stacy, Cleveland County Commissioner

Elizabeth Richardson, Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerc

Marilyn Long, Northeast Resource Center Incorporated

Mary Ellen Davis, Norman Adult Education Program

Manisha Reddy, ResCare

Aaron Walker, Metro Technology Center

Paul Howard, Metro Technology Center

Dennis Gober, Office of Juvenile Affairs

Jan Hatch, Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services

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conflicts of so many partners' calendars, taking advantage of a regular time when they'd be together anyway made sense and has given the project some momentum.

In one part of the Big Region the community colleges and manufacturing extension agents are highly involved. Not only have they come to the table, but they are vocal. This has helped garner interest from other partners.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Challenge 1: Geography. Size was a challenge for all of the pilots. In Southern, for example, with fourteen counties, involving one agency like the Department of Human Services or an organization like the Chamber of Commerce can mean needing to reach out to up to fourteen different organizational leads. Multiply that times the many types of organizations involved in the workforce system, and the project team had a big task in front of them to educate, engage, maintain involvement, and equip the organizational heads to do the same for their staff. In the Big Region, although the three sub-regions had some commonalities, having large urban as well as rural areas within them, this region became too large to work effectively on several of the steps.

- *Solution*: **Shrink the perceived size of the geography by identifying key partners and identifying how to reach multiple partners with one outreach effort**. Southern did this at their orientation. For example, because the Career Tech Center directors meet regularly, the team set a goal of getting on the next directors' meeting agenda to present information and seek their buy-in.

- *Solution*: Partners in all regions emphasized how critical it is that communication comes from the top down -- **that state agency leads must communicate their support of this initiative in order to get buy-in from all area agency directors**. Sharing information on the project, encouraging participation, and checking on progress all send the message that this is a priority to the state and should be to the locals. In Southern, several partners received emails from their state directors telling them to get involved. And when the Department of Rehabilitation Services had a mandatory state-level meeting scheduled for the same time that Southern scheduled service-mapping training, the state lead made this commitment real by excusing the pilot team member from the departments mandatory training in order to allow them to participate in the pilot training session.

Big Region Pilot Partners *(cont)*

Alba Weaver, OG*E

Kevin Barber, OK Manufacturers Alliance

Jessica Martinez-Brooks, Oklahoma City Community College

Bill Bryant, Central OK WIB

Lisa Graven, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission

Minnie Castillo, ORO Development Corporation

Tom Gray, Oklahoma Department of Commerce

Rachel Hutchings, Past Chair Tulsa Workforce Board and incoming Chair of OK Employment Security Commission

Pamela Hunnicutt, East Central WIB

Cheryl Cook - OK Employment Security Commission

Vickie Kinsey - Experience Works

Alisa Estes - OK Department of Rehabilitation Services

Rudy Cochera, Veterans Administration

Marc Jensen, University of Oklahoma

Jeri Ray, OK Employment Security Commission

Kimley Ward, OK Employment Security Commission

Jan Thornton, OK Employment Security Commission

Donna Sanders, OK Employment Security Commission

Elfreda Fields, OK Employment Security Commission

Linda Wilson, Goodwill

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- *Solution:* **The Big pilot region broke into three smaller groups** (COWIB, East Central, and Tulsa workforce areas) to begin developing visions within each. The service-mapping and process-mapping activities are also being done within the three smaller regions.

Challenge 2: Equipping Partners to Spread the Word. Reaching out to new partners was somewhat daunting for those whose attendance at the orientation marked the first time they had even heard about the New Day, New Way system certification initiative.

- *Solution:* The Southern team allowed folks to **volunteer to outreach, which allowed those least comfortable to step aside**. They also agreed to **craft a presentation that they could use to guide their outreach efforts**, to equip those reaching out with the information they would need and ensure that everyone was communicating the same message. If the state could develop and/or share these materials throughout the state, other local areas could reach out more quickly and confidently. Key pieces include a PowerPoint presentation, talking points, and a brief 1- or 2-page synopsis of the project. In addition, as one leader emphasized, the focus should be on personal outreach rather than on sending information, because people might not take the time to read a description, but they are more likely to pay attention to a presentation.

Challenge 3: Information Not Getting through can Hinder Getting Buy-In.

- *Solution:* Share information, share information again, then repeat. It is important for leaders at the state and local levels to **share information on what the initiative is, why it matters, and progress made**. In some circumstances, folks are busy and simply need to see and hear something a few times for the information to sink in. Repetition also clues the listeners in that, "Hmm…maybe this isn't the flavor of the day. I'd better pay more attention." Finally, there is a different audience each time you present the material, so with repetition you will over time reach more people. Those presenting need to remember that, while this is old hat for them, this is new and confusing for many listeners, so they need to start with the basics every time. Kathy Hendrick from the Southern Pilot stated: "Once you get involved in it, you forget how much and how little everybody else knows…"

We still find there is still a lot of confusion about what we are doing. When we started to do the mapping we had people saying in the meeting they don't know why they are here, that their boss just told them to be here. So they clearly didn't get the message. The message is clearly not getting to the people on the frontlines."

- Leadership Team Member, Eastern Pilot

- Solution: **State agencies ensure that their message of support is getting through to the front-line staff in every office**. Suggestions include meeting at the state level with individuals responsible for passing down the information to ensure that they are in the loop and that communication occurs, hosting joint training through technology offered through the career tech system so that all agencies' front line staff will get the same message from their bosses, developing a short U-Tube presentation to post and share with partners, and each agency director posting information on their website.

- Solution: **When the size of the region dictates that there be one representative from an agency with multiple offices, identify people willing to participate and carry the message back to others**. The Big

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Region began with CEOs but quickly found that, with their busy schedules, they are not always the best representatives for carrying the message back to their staff.

Challenge 4: Difficulty in Seeing "What's in it for Me?"

▪ *Solution*: **Clearly articulate "what's in it for me?" to each partner**. For some human services agencies, their natural motivation is streamlining services for the job-seeker customer and helping their case managers do their jobs more effectively. For others, such as colleges and Chambers of Commerce, they might tune out those messages but be very interested in discussions around how to support employers, economic growth, and a talent pipeline in a way that saves the partner money or time. An effective approach is to paint a picture of why this matters in terms of real people, e.g., what does a customer experience when they want retraining or to find a new job?

Challenge 5: Skepticism that Nothing Will Really Change

▪ *Solution*: At both the state and local level, be sure to **deliver on your promises**. At the local level, sharing responsibilities across the partners while dedicating staff support will help make this possible. The state must continue to drive home the message that this initiative is critical to the state's economic vitality, support the implementation with training and technical assistance for the regions, and deliver the products they have committed to develop that will support system building, such as the common intake portal (as they have by developing and delivering ADA compliance training, in line with one of the system certification standards). Skepticism is natural, since a new administration or leadership tends to bring in new initiatives (for instance, one partner recalled a state initiative in 1998 to develop common intake forms that never got off the ground). For some, engagement will come only once they can see progress. But even for those eager to get involved, sustained support and practical results will ward off discouragement and fatigue.

▪ *Solution*: **Focus on what you can change and do not get bogged down trying to change what you cannot—yet**. Set this as a ground rule up front so everyone can remain productive and see progress more quickly.

▪ *Solution*: **Share information in a "mixed" crowd or in an informal setting with one or two leaders**. When the group is made up of staff from the same organization, there seems to be more resistance to change. As Southern's Donnalla Miller explained, "Because as soon as you're done, they're all looking at each other and saying the same thing: 'This isn't going to work, and this is why this isn't going to work and this is a waste of time.'"

Challenge 6: Competing Priorities make Focusing on the Initiative Difficult. Eastern Region knew this was a huge undertaking. The area had just acquired fiscal agent responsibility for another WIB area. While the coverage in the Region grew, Eastern's staff of ten did not. In the Big Region, trying to establish partnerships across three workforce areas took time and negatively impacted other daily work that must be completed as well. Eddie Foreman from the Big Pilot Region stated, "What surprised me is how slow the process is due to the group getting sidetracked by their daily work."

▪ *Solution:* **Have the state allow a flexible timeline that can adjust for varying realities in regions around the state**. Nanette Robertson of the Eastern Region noted: "A lot of what we accomplished we get done and then realize we're butting right up on the next step before we've had time to digest what we've just

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completed. There is a lot of information to process, so allowing adequate time between each step is definitely something that we would recommend to another area."

- *Solutio*n: The Big Region leadership team is using partners to bring in other partners, which will **expand the partnership base and allow responsibilities to be shared more equally and be less of a burden on any one partner**.

- *Solution*: Because everyone is very busy, project leads should **be sure each invitation to participate in a meeting includes an agenda that articulates the purpose of the meeting so people can see why they should come and come prepared**. Identifying someone to "staff" this project (an intermediary) provides necessary structure to keep the project and communications moving along. The intermediary must remind and follow up with those who do not respond or who commit to doing something in a meeting. Although this takes time there is return on that time investment. In choosing the intermediary, staff in Southern's pilot stressed the importance of **identifying someone with the right personality to be a taskmaster without alienating people**.

Step 2: Develop An Integrated System Vision

In the Southern Region, except for Donnalla Miller and the staff to the Board who had been attending Governor's Council and System Certification Task Force meetings, most of the partners came to November's orientation knowing very little about the New Day, New Way initiative. They came because they trusted Kerry Manning, the Board Director, when she said, "You need to be here." Further, they had a history of collaboration that was almost "business as usual," there was a desire to make a change and improve service delivery, and, in some cases, they had received the message from their state directors to participate. The orientation, though, gave them an opportunity to really understand what the system certification initiative was about and to get started on their regional plan.

Time was set aside at the orientation so each pilot area could assess the state of their region's system and identify priorities for action, roles, and some next steps. Sometimes the conversation would shift to one particular agency's needs, but mostly the team, assisted by a facilitator, kept the conversation focused on how well the region planned and provided service as a system.

At the orientation, the Southern Project Team decided that they would try to begin to get all the partners (those at the orientation, along with others they planned to reach out to) to see themselves as part of a broader system by focusing on each program or agency's goals. The project lead, Kerry Manning, thought there would be significant overlap, and the group could see that "we really are all after the same thing…at the end of the day." The staff to the Board on the Leadership Team volunteered to email all the partners, requesting that they submit their goals to them to be compiled and shared at their first meeting of all partners in late January. (Outreach efforts to engage new partners were to be completed by January 10th, to allow time for the board's staff to email new partners requesting their goals and invite them to attend the January Pilot Team meeting.)

At Eastern's January regional startup meeting, sixteen partners attended. At that time, the lead team provided the attendees with an overview of the project, explained goals for certification, and talked about the framework for system versus center.

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WHAT WORKED

The self-assessment tool developed by the System Certification Task Force provides a structured framework for thinking through the strengths and weaknesses of the area's workforce system. In Southern's case, there are many pockets of excellence among the partners, but the self-assessment quickly helped them see that they have a long way to go to plan and deliver services as a broader system.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Challenge 1: Simply understanding what the System Certification Initiative is all about.

- *Solution*: **Take advantage of the orientation and invite all the partners that you can**. Those who attended the orientation from all regions felt that the initiative is so complex that the more partners who can attend and learn in this intensive way at the very beginning, the better.

- *Solution*: **Take advantage of the tools available**, including the brief 1-2 page fact sheet, the power point slides on the initiative, and the list of all the state partners who have made a commitment. Southern suggested that the state may also want to bring in representatives from the pilots to share their experiences at the next orientation.

Challenge 2: Getting everyone to think about the workforce system, not their own organization or the workforce centers. Eastern leaders shared that, while they work together well with their partners and there is a spirit of collaboration, territory still inevitably comes up. "We play nicely in our sandbox but our toys are our toys, and we don't necessarily want to share them. This is the attitude we still face though we are working towards changing this attitude. It's a mindset change of how the system comes together for the customer. We have corrected our own thinking along the way. Sometimes we float back to center thinking and have to remind ourselves it's about the system."

"Once we get to the end of this process, I think it will all come together. It will probably be like 'that's why we did this and that's why we did that.' Once you have some successes, it is always easier. But it takes time…. We're finding out where the problems are. We really don't know there's a problem there until we work through the process…People don't see the outcomes yet, but they will eventually."

-Kathy Hendrick, Southern Pilot

- *Solution*: **Communicate the vision from the top down**. The orientation featured many state agency heads and Governor's Council members who emphasized the need to "take off our agency hats" and think broadly about the workforce system, not programs or centers. (Further support from the state level will be needed when the region identifies changes they want to make that will likely conflict with state policies and/or procedures.)

- *Solution*: **Clear meeting goals and strong facilitation** to connect each partner's concerns to the bigger system picture, from the beginning. Southern attempted to help the partners see all that they had in common by starting with each partner's goals. But in doing so, the first meeting kept many participants in their silos, talking about their own goals and their own concerns, and they did not loop back to help people begin to think about how others' services intersect with their own. The up-side was that they got to learn about the various partner programs and had a platform to voice their concerns. At the same time, the leadership team believes that more clearly defining the goals of the meeting and strong, more structured

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facilitation that would drive the meeting to ensure that information sharing remains system-focused would have resulted in a better sense of purpose and more accomplished at the first meeting.

- *Solution*: **Be careful not to portray this as WIA or workforce center-driven**. Use language that keeps the focus on system (not center or WIA), ensure that board members (including private sector members, not staff) own it, encourage project leads to portray themselves as "conveners" who support all the partners, and involve nontraditional partners in leadership roles. For example, Southern's board staff have a long, strong relationship with the economic development director at Southeastern Oklahoma State University, and they asked her to serve as facilitator for all their pilot team meetings.

- *Solution*: **Have the state continue to hire a neutral outside consultant and facilitators** on this project.

Challenge 3: Getting a clear understanding of the role of the various partners and their role in the system. In the Big Region, they have found that not all partners understand their role in getting people "to work" versus "to learn" or "to stay alive."

- *Solution:* The Eastern Region is planning to **develop "system" orientation training for all front line staff** so they all get the same message.

- Solution: Leaders from the Big Region emphasize the **importance of this message coming from the state down**, from the governor through the agency directors, so that each partner understands their role in the system.

- *Solution:* **Service-mapping and process-mapping are essential tools** in learning about the partner agencies' roles.

Step 3: Develop Team Action Plan

At the orientation, Southern completed the self-assessment and identified areas of highest priority for them to be able to make progress as a system. These included:

- Developing a Unified Plan with common goals and measures that all partners buy into.
- Establishing methods for ongoing communication among the partners.
- Training all staff to ensure consistent knowledge and customer service.
- Coordinating job seeker and employer services so that any customer will know all of the services for which he may be eligible through any access point in the system.
- Creating a centralized Contact Management System to coordinate employer services.
- Improving accessibility for all job seeker customers via multiple physical and virtual entry points.
- Developing and using shared tools for job seekers such as common referral processes, shared assessments, and job readiness training.
- Implementing the Unified Plan to reduce duplication and improve integration of services throughout the system.

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They also identified technical assistance that would help support these efforts, including access to facilitation support; training in service-mapping, resource, and process-mapping; and training by the state in new tools they develop that support system integration (such as a common data portal, shared intake form, online staff training curriculum, and the framework for a central contact management system for employer engagement).

The Eastern region recognized that staff, caught up in administrative functions, was not as focused on client service as in the past. They discovered that each provider delivering services through the center has different ways of operating and different philosophies.

To address this, Eastern identified a key first step toward improved system integration and customer service – procuring an independent One-Stop operator instead of using the consortium of partners that are too busy with their daily work to effectively provide the functions of the one-stop operator. This will bring a synergy, quality, and efficiency to the services and have everyone (WIB, Operator, services providers) operating with the same guiding principles, values, and vision. The RFP will include system requirements, and the partners are going to be involved in selecting the One-Stop operator, giving them a "buy in regarding the selection. This will ensure that the partners will see the One-Stop operator as belonging to the WIB <u>and</u> being the *system* operator. This should also help make the services more seamless to the client. Their goal is to develop a system that no matter where customers enter, they will receive a consistent response across all workforce centers and partners.

> *"It was really eye-opening how many people in the room did not think that they were a part of the workforce system even though we had been partnering with them for years. A lot of people did not even know that they had a representative on the WIB; they thought it was just about Title 1 (of the Workforce Investment Act)."*
>
> Leadership Team Member
> Eastern Pilot

WHAT WORKED

Taking the time out at the orientation to complete the self-assessment enabled multiple partners to contribute knowledge and ideas, which built buy-in to the priorities the group identified.

The state looked at the technical assistance needs that had been identified and invested state and U.S. Department of Labor technical assistance dollars into meeting them. Specifically, they retained Ricki Kozumplik of SPRA and AHA Consulting to provide training in service-mapping to each of the three pilot areas.

In Eastern, the partners will be involved in the One-Stop operator selection process. Therefore, they will have a stake in that hire. This will also give them "buy-in" as to the selection. The result will be that the partner will see the one-stop operator as the system operator in addition to its connection to the WIB.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Challenge 1: Making everyone aware of the state's role in developing several systems or products that will better equip a local area to work as a system, and following through quickly. At the orientation, it became apparent that, although some attendees were aware of state plans (for systems such as a uniform client data portal), others were not.

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- *Solution*: There was consensus that **all needed to know what the state is doing**, so that locals don't waste time or effort duplicating something that the state is already doing. This should include sharing up front (at the orientation, perhaps) a list of all coming systems or products and timelines for their completion.

- *Solution*: At the same time, **the state must ensure timely development of the tools** while commitment remains high, which will prevent delays in local progress. Many system integration improvements are outside of the local area's control and reliant upon the state's developing the products it has promised. Furthermore, infrastructure such as the client data portal is essential for good customer service. As one Eastern leader put it: "The truth is, if you have people who can barely fill up their gas tanks then it is a burden to expect them to drive all over the region to find services. We need to focus on lessening that burden."

Challenge 2: Confusion about who needs to be involved in the initiative and invited to the orientation.
Eastern leaders believe, in retrospect, that they needed more time in the beginning to identify partners that truly should have been at the table. Some of the individuals they had at the kick-off meeting did not need to be there, and other necessary partners were missing. While they knew the overall scope of the initiative, the reality of what they would be doing at the initial kick-off and orientation was not apparent until they were actually there. In the Big Region, the size meant they needed to contact many people, and they simply did not have enough time.

- *Solution*: The Eastern team believes it would help to have **more information on what the orientation is and who needs to be there, along with more advance notice to allow preparation and outreach time for the leaders**, would help. They would, for instance, **make sure that everyone understands the concept of "system" versus "center" before completing the self-assessment**. They would also not have brought business members to the initial orientation.

- *Solution*: One leadership team member from the Big Region suggested that the **state provide options for teleconferencing for the training and meetings** (including the orientation), to allow more flexibility for attendance.

Step 4: Develop Unified Workforce Development Plan

While developing a unified workforce development plan is a required step in the system certification process, it was also a critical first step that Southern identified on its own after conducting the self-assessment. Everyone at the orientation agreed that the plan would be essential for all partners to understand how they work together to meet the workforce needs in their area, streamline services, and improve economic outcomes. As noted above, Southern attempted to begin with goals, in order to craft system goals that everyone could get behind (with mixed results) in January 2013.

In late February, the state brought together the pilot leadership teams for a conversation on how to assess the drivers of their local economies, referred to as "ecosystems." Participants learned to differentiate between sectors that may create jobs but do not grow the economy as they simply circulate funds within the local economy, and sectors that bring in outside funds to create growth and vitality. For example, a hairdresser receives payment from a local client, which she might spend at a local store or movie theater; the same dollar moves about the local economy. In contrast, a park might attract visitors from Texas, who spend dollars on food

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and boat rentals, which inject new, additional funds into the local economy. For Southern, the ecosystem data that the state Department of Commerce provided indicated that manufacturing is their key driver.

Once Southern's partners agreed to focus on manufacturing first, the next step was to map services for both sets of customers – job seekers and employers – in order to identify areas of overlap (that could be streamlined) and gaps (that would need to be filled). The partners agreed to begin with job seekers (as it seemed to resonate with more of the partners, who are predominantly from a human services perspective). The state brought in the consultant, Ricki Kozumplik, once again to train each local in how to conduct service mapping. Southern scheduled their training after their board meeting in late March, beginning with mapping services to job seekers in the area of manufacturing. At the time of this write-up, board staff is still compiling completed service matrices from each of the partners, which will provide a picture of services across the pilot area so that members can get started streamlining and improving job seeker services, satisfactions, and outcomes.

Eastern is still waiting for their ecosystem data report from the state so they can take the next steps on plan development. The team knows their region is dealing with low literacy levels and low high school graduation rates. They also know Eastern is a very heavy manufacturing area, which is a quickly changing field. The Region has people in their 40-50s doing the same job they were doing since 18 who now need to be retrained. That requires a completely different approach for workforce development. Because of these issues, the Region does not want to rush the process. Once they receive the ecosystem information, they will put together a strategic planning process with their partners.

In the Big Region, all three sub-parts of this pilot are waiting for ecosystem data so they can develop a unified workforce development plan. They initially attempted to get information on their own from employers about the key industries and their needs, but they are now waiting for the ecosystem data before beginning the official planning process for the unified plan.

This pilot region held the first business services service-mapping session and the first business services process-mapping session in the COWIB sub-region. All three sub-regions have conducted their business and services-mapping processes and completed a mini gap analysis on each. When discussing the next steps of addressing the gaps, the COWIB sub-region developed two overarching questions to use: "What will we gain by addressing this gap?" and "Where is the best return on investment?"

Leadership team members indicated that they anticipated they would need facilitation help when beginning to develop the plan. They stated that "many partners have been doing things the same way for many years, so it may be difficult to have the team come to consensus on the plan."

WHAT WORKED

The state training in ecosystems along with data to highlight the key drivers of economic growth in Southern were crucial to getting everyone moving in the same direction. This data will be essential to every local area that begins this process.

Service-mapping is so complex that the training and support provided by a consultant is critical and should be maintained as other local areas begin the process. Eastern found creative ways to simplify the process. At Eastern's first partnership meeting the lead team made a suggestion to separate out education, business, and social services and have each subset do its mapping in groups with similar language. It saved time because education did not have to translate to social services and vice versa.

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Eastern also simplified the mapping matrix, reducing it to one page that included "Do you provide the service?" and "To whom?" They decided that having the funding in the mix threw everyone off.

While Southern's service maps haven't been finalized as of writing this report, early drafts have impressed several partners and even inspired a new partner to want to be part of it and share what services they provide too.

The Eastern Pilot is putting all of the data from their asset- and process-mapping into a database that they will share with all of the partners within the system. During the process-mapping, partners looked for places across the system where they can streamline and avoid duplication (for example, eliminating clients having to take the same test every place they go to enroll for services or programs). At the next meeting, the staff will review the database with all of the partners.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Challenge 1: Getting agreement on what to focus on first.

▪ *Solution*: **Use the ecosystem data to help drive decision-making**. Southern tried to foster buy-in by allowing the partners, in the first meeting in January, to identify the first set of services they wanted to work on integrating. The votes went to services related to jobs in the health care industry, an area of high demand across the region, particularly in some of the more rural areas. However, the state provided economic data shortly afterwards that identified manufacturing as the biggest driver of economic growth. As a result, the Steering Team had to go back and get everyone to agree to shift focus to manufacturing, which they feared undermined ownership. They strongly recommend waiting to identify key areas to work on until the state provides ecosystem data, then "let the data do the talking." So for the state, identifying and disseminating the ecosystem data for each local area at an early stage of their process will be essential.

Challenge 2: The complexity of service-mapping. The service-mapping template that team members were asked to complete is very complex, with each partner needing to identify services they provide and describe them according to a long list of service attributes (e.g., populations served and how services are provided-- including one-one-one or in a group, schedule, costs, and where provided). Eastern Region was particularly perplexed by the consultant's request that they address each service an agency provides by funding stream. Since four agencies touch the same funding stream this approach became quite complicated.

▪ *Solution:* **Do not try to build the service-mapping training onto another meeting, and clearly articulate start and stop times so folks can be there from start to finish**. Southern scheduled this training in the afternoon, immediately following a morning Board meeting, and many attendees had to leave before the training was over.

▪ *Solution:* **Give a better sense of what service-mapping is and how going through the complex process can yield benefits**, maybe by going through a generic example of a completed form (perhaps the state could use one of the pilot's completed matrices).

▪ *Solution:* While some thought the service-mapping process was excellent, others were overwhelmed by the complexity of the forms and suggested that **the state or other regions simplify the forms and process**, if at all possible. Eastern did just that, by eliminating discussions about funding source and dividing into three workgroups that spoke similar '"languages" – education, business services, and social services. Once Eastern

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took the funding out of the conversation and looked only at each service by agency, the process went smoother. Partners in this region do not make decisions around what funding pays for each service (the WIB is responsible to determine this for WIA funds), but they were able to complete the services list by agency.

- *Solution*: **Speed up the process to compile and distribute the data** so that people completing the forms can see the total picture for the whole region and get down to the business of eliminating duplications and filling service gaps quickly. This will help everyone better understand the purpose of the task and keep momentum alive.

- *Solution*: **Consider using laptops so everyone enters their data electronically and prints out the matrices**. That would save the project staff several days of work, since they would not have to read and enter in hand-written data. Moreover, it would ensure greater accuracy and reduce revision time.

Challenge 3: Deadlines for certification too short. The Eastern Region believes the deadline for certification is not realistic as they are still awaiting ecosystem data they need for their unified planning. The team does not feel really prepared at this point to engage the business services. The Region suggests they needed a year or six months of prep work before jumping into the mapping process.

- *Solution:* **Have the state provide a more flexible timeline**.

Step 5: Implement Unified Plan

None of the pilots have reached the implementation stage yet, but Southern's leaders have a few suggestions for the state that will improve the odds of successful implementation:

- Continue to develop the systems and tools that will support improvements in services for customers and communicate progress.

- Consider conducting service-and resource-mapping at the state level in order to set the example, try to reduce duplication, and fill gaps at the state level, too.

- Continue to communicate the importance of this initiative from the Governor's Council and agency heads.

- Gather success stories from the local areas and find a way to share them.

- Continue providing support from state leads and through the help of training through the consultant.

- Make sure that certification "means something," that it will acknowledge changes in the way services are provided in a local area, not just a commitment to the process.

- Recognize that real change will take time, and allow the process the flexibility for local areas to apply for certification when this occurs.

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CROSS-CUTTING LESSONS LEARNED

LESSON #1 – Just do it!

All of the pilots indicated the importance of not postponing meeting with your partners until after you understand everything about the initiative. One pilot team member stated, "Just get started. Don't over think it and don't expect it to be a linear, smooth process." In another pilot, when asked how they got started, a leadership team member responded, "We're just used to jumping in with both feet and trying to be first! We know from experience the best way to learn is to just get in there and do it."

> *"Just get started. Don't over think it and don't expect it to be a linear, smooth process."*
>
> Leadership Team Member

A simple way to "just do it" is to establish regularly scheduled leadership team meetings at the first meeting, so that all members keep the date available on their calendars. One pilot scheduled their meetings immediately after each WIB meeting (usually every other month), since many of the leadership team members are on the WIB. Given the time involved in bringing people together from across the large region, plus the difficulty posed by scheduling-conflicts of so many partners' calendars, taking advantage of a regular time when they would already be gathered made sense and has given the project some momentum.

LESSON #2 – Establish an intermediary

Everyone in the pilot phase agreed that creating a system from a collection of agencies is a large task. It takes concentrated effort and time for someone to be thinking about not only the step that was just completed, but also about the upcoming steps. There are meetings to plan and conduct; minutes to type and distribute; service maps and processes to compile, type and distribute; partners to invite, orient, and update; plans to write; staff orientation and training to conduct; goals to develop; data to collect; and measurements to review. Doing all of this can be hard while also trying to fulfill your current job. And even if these tasks are shared among all of the partners, it takes someone to coordinate that collaboration. One leadership team member said it best when stating, "What surprised me is how slow the process is due to the group getting sidetracked by their daily work."

What can help make the process more manageable is to identify an intermediary for day-to-day coordination. This person or organization functions as a go-between, coordinating the work of all the separate partners. The intermediary takes care of various operational functions identified by leadership team members, such as coordinating and facilitating team meetings and supporting completion of action plans. In a broader sense, the intermediary is responsible for daily thinking about the next steps needed to move the system forward and, therefore, needs to stay one step ahead of the leadership team. The intermediary also serves as the system's champion, promoting it to the leadership team, key partner agencies, and the community as a whole.

Early on in the development of your initiative, your team will want to decide which person and/or agency will take the lead in coordinating the leadership group activities and assigned tasks involved in carrying out the initiative.

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LESSON #3 – Build on already-established relationships

The pilots with partners that have a long history of collaboration on projects that have resulted in good, trusting relationships were able to get a quick start. They had partners that were willing to come to the initial pilot training, even though they knew very little about the initiative at that time. Pulling partners primarily from those on the WIBs as well as those working together in the workforce centers, the pilots were able to establish a core leadership team. From there they worked together to craft an outreach plan to engage other partners.

One pilot noted that this system certification process had brought the partners even closer, helping them learn more about each other. This led to increased networking, support, and resource-sharing that strengthened the "system."

LESSON #4 – Work quickly to develop a vision of the integrated system

All pilots stated that the system certification piece is difficult to fully understand. This must be remedied. It is important that all partners understand how a system differs from a center and that they are all a part of the system, even if they are not housed within a center. Further, all partners need to see where they fit within the overall system—what role(s) they play within the system. Finally, all partners need to understand the WIIFMs (what's in it for me) to creating this effective, integrated, streamlined workforce development system. One leadership team member stated, "Why do this? It'll help streamline our system, our services, and it'll help with the resources that are being cut constantly." Donnalla Miller added, "So it's good not just for the customer; it's good for the partners too….Granted it is about customer, customer, customer, quality service. But you know what? It's also about [wanting] it to be more seamless and transparent for the people doing the job….Sometimes legitimately they can't provide exceptional customer service because of the red tape and garbage they've got to go through."

The sooner the partners develop a vision of the integrated system, the sooner they will be able to support the vision and the process to get there. Cody Cox, Southern Pilot team member noted, "I'm not so sure [partners] aren't interested or don't have buy-in. I'm just not sure they even know what's going on. For those partners who are disengaged, I'd like to see what message has been sent to them….And it has to be of value and it has to be real."

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EFFECTIVE STATE SUPPORT STRATEGIES

The state provided support that the pilots said was critical. As other regions become involved, the state will offer more of that crucial support where it is needed.

Initial Orientation and Pilot Self-Assessments

Each pilot attended an initial state-sponsored orientation, which assisted each pilot in multiple ways. First, the provided information oriented the initial partner team to what the New Day, New Way initiative is about and why it matters. Second, the presentations by and presence of state directors and Governor's Task Force members communicated clearly that this is a high priority, which helped with buy-in. Third, the self-assessment tool developed by the System Certification Task Force provided a structured framework for thinking through the strengths and weaknesses of the area's workforce system. The time set aside in the last half and the availability of a neutral facilitator to help the pilots to complete their assessments, identify priority areas to work on, and establish some next steps ensured that everyone left knowing what is next for them, so good intentions did not get swallowed up by busy schedules.

State-Provided Technical Assistance and Training

Through state and federal funds, the state has provided a consultant and facilitators to help lead this initiative. This began with the task force and continued through the selection and training of the pilots. All three pilots mentioned that having a state-supported consultant was instrumental in keeping the initiative going and helped provide direction. They indicated that service-mapping is so complex that the training and support provided by a consultant is critical and should be maintained as other local areas begin the process. They also recommended that the state continue providing support from state leads and through the help of training through the consultant.

The Service- and Process-Mapping Sessions

All pilots indicated that the service-mapping sessions have been helpful in identifying the role(s) of partner agencies within the workforce development system. Although many of the pilots are still working to compile the service maps, they are beginning to use them as they create their job seeker and business services process maps. The partners have been very impressed at the amount of information found within the service maps, and in one pilot it inspired a new partner to join the initiative.

Ecosystems Information

One pilot has received the state-developed ecosystems information. The other pilots are eager to receive the information relevant to their areas. The data included within the reports will become the foundation of the unified plans to be developed in each pilot region. Although one pilot originally planned to gather data themselves about the key industry clusters, the jobs within them, and the skills required to perform them well, the leadership team members realized that the ecosystem report they received from the state would be more comprehensive and less time-consuming than trying to gather it on their own. Remember, the state will be providing your ecosystem information as you begin your system building process.

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SYSTEM CERTIFICATION STEPS BACKGROUND AND DETAIL

The certification application process seen below will take place after the system conducts a formal self-assessment, receives any needed technical assistance, and has had the opportunity to take any necessary additional actions to prepare for certification.

Self-Assessment

The certification process begins with a pre-application phase for local regions to conduct self-assessments against the certification standards and measures. Self-assessment is one of the most important and productive components of the certification process, as it serves multiple purposes beyond assessment alone. It creates an opportunity to bring all system partners together to engage in meaningful dialogue and exchange, and thus serves as a learning activity for system partners. As they engage collaboratively in the self-assessment process, partners should take the opportunity to fully map system services and resources and identify areas of duplication and inefficiency. Self-assessment results also serve as the basis for the system's corrective action and continuous improvement planning prior to entering the certification application process. At the state level, systems' self-assessment results may be aggregated to identify common and widespread areas of need and then prioritize statewide technical assistance support accordingly.

Intent to Apply

Once the workforce system has assessed itself, determining that it is ready to apply for certification, the next step is to submit its intent to apply for certification to the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee. Systems have the opportunity to apply for certification during two windows during the year, in October and April. In order to help the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee anticipate the number of systems that might be applying during either of these two certification cycles, and to assemble and staff an appropriate number of Certification Reviewer(s), systems will submit notification of their intent to apply for certification in an upcoming cycle. Systems that intend to seek certification in the cycle beginning in October are asked to submit their intent no later than September; systems intending to seek certification in the cycle beginning in April would submit their intent no later than March.

If, after submitting its intent to apply, a system decides not to pursue certification in that cycle, it simply withdraws its notification or otherwise notifies the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee, and it will not be penalized.

Certification Application

Following submission of their intent to apply for certification, all system partners should work collaboratively to develop their certification application package. In order to request a certification application review, a system submits, at a minimum, the following components to the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee:

   a.   A complete certification application request, jointly signed by locally-determined designees of all system partners:

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b. An assessment of the region, including the ecosystem(s) for the region, the workforce development needs of those key employers (or a plan to identify them), and a plan for how the system will address those identified needs for the following two-year period;

c. Functional system service- and resource-maps;

d. A functional memorandum of understanding signed by all partners;

e. A plan identifying how the system partners will collectively continuously monitor the needs of both the employers and job seeker customers and use them in their planning process; and,

f. The complete results of the system's pre-certification self-assessment, which should include relevant discussion of how any deficiencies identified during the initial self-assessment have been addressed in advance of the certification review.

As part of its certification package, systems are encouraged to submit any additional material that may assist the Reviewer(s) in its preparation for the certification review. Submitting additional relevant materials increases the amount that the Certification Reviewer(s) can accomplish prior to the onsite visit and thereby increases efficiency and production while onsite. It will also reduce the Certification Reviewer(s) pre-visit desk review burden and enhance their familiarity with the system and the regional workforce area. These materials may include the system's strategic plan, business/operations plan, a sample of recent employer and job seeker customer feedback, and/or other documents.

Application Review/Reviewer Assignment

Once the system submits its certification application package to the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee, the Committee reviews the application for thoroughness and completeness and requests any necessary additional information from the system.

The Workforce Systems Oversight Committee then assembles and assigns a Certification Reviewer(s) to conduct the system's certification review. The Certification Reviewer(s) will receive the system's certification application package from the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee with enough advance notice for it to review the package thoroughly and conduct expected supplementary research prior to its onsite system visit. The Workforce Systems Oversight Committee will be responsible for ensuring onsite review scheduling coordination between the system and the assigned Reviewer(s).

The Workforce Systems Oversight Committee will work collaboratively with the system and the assigned Certification Reviewer(s) to coordinate a certification review schedule that is agreeable to all stakeholders in the process and includes a pre-visit desk review as well as an onsite review.

Review and Certification Recommendation

The One-Stop System review and certification recommendation process includes the following principles and activities:

a. The Certification Reviewer(s) conduct a desk review (based on the system's application package) and supplementary research on the application system and its local workforce area in advance of its onsite visit. This desk review will be conducted within 30 days following receipt of the system's certification application package.

b. The onsite visit by the Reviewer(s) comprises the majority of the certification review. The onsite visit and certification recommendation report will be completed within 30 days following the desk review.

The onsite review will be as minimally disruptive to system operations as possible and, if feasible, will take place in one full day (but could require more than one day). The onsite review will include, at a minimum:
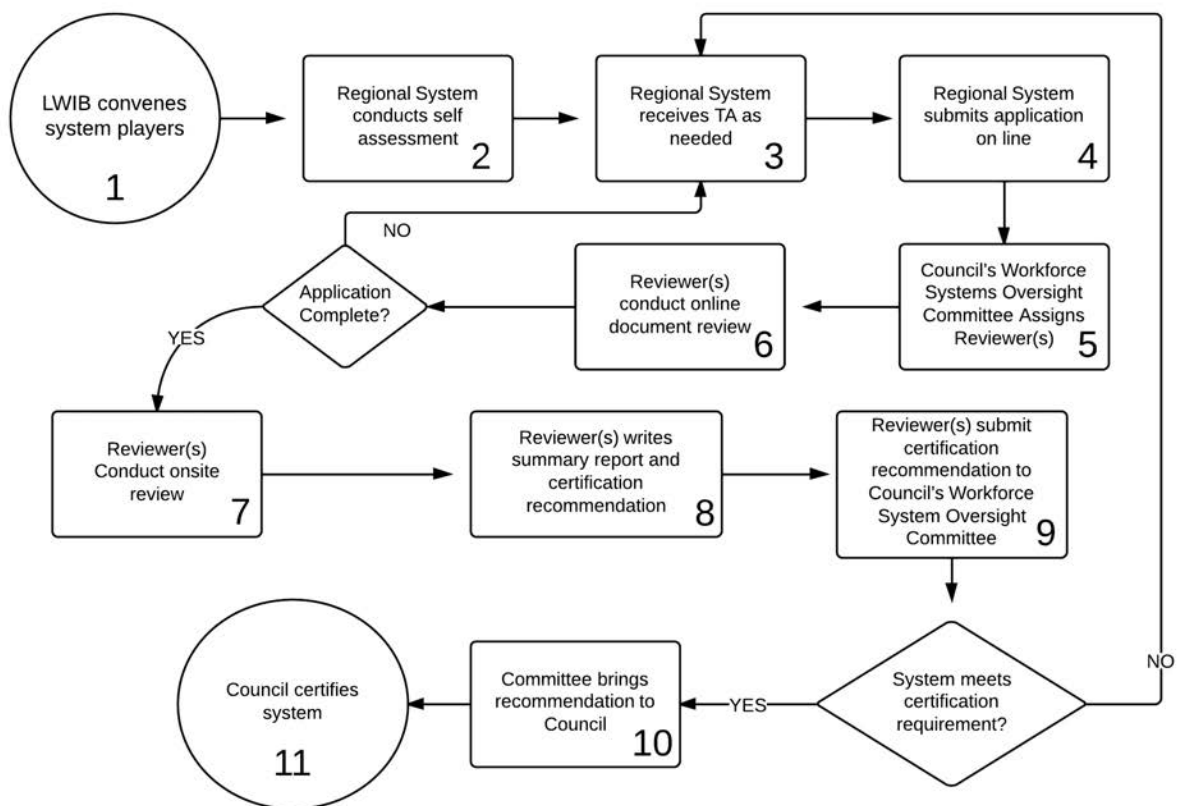
    i.   A walk-through of various parts of the system, as a customer might experience the service delivery flow and referrals;

    ii.   Interviews with system staff, including all system partners and including personnel from the management level to the front-line service delivery level;

    iii.   Interviews with a sample of employer and job seeker customers;

    iv.   A review of the system's general materials; outreach and orientation materials, media, and activities; workshop and meeting offerings; and system and Center calendars, as appropriate;

    v.   A review of the system's facilities, layout, and infrastructure, with an eye toward customer accessibility and customer flow; and,

    vi.   Any additional onsite review needed to validate status against the certification standards-- review of system governance policies and practices, training and professional development plans and activities, customer feedback mechanisms, etc.

c.   The Certification Reviewer(s) will meet immediately following the onsite review to come to consensus on its observations, identify any additional information required to make a certification recommendation, and define preliminary recommendations.

d.   The Reviewer(s) will be prepared to conduct a debrief/exit interview with key system management and staff to share its findings and recommendations, either in person or virtually, as quickly as possible following the onsite review.

e.   If the Reviewer(s) determines that additional information or follow-up questions are needed, he will re-connect with the system by phone or email as quickly as possible following the site visit.

f.   The Certification Reviewer(s) will collaboratively prepare a formal written recommendation immediately following the system site visit and submit that recommendation simultaneously to the system and to the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee. The recommendation will be submitted no later than 30 days following the onsite system review. Should the system not meet the requirements for certification, the notification will include detailed and specific recommendations for improvement and technical assistance.

g.   The Workforce Systems Oversight Committee will be responsible for considering the Certification Reviewers' recommendations at its next meeting after receiving the recommendation from the Certification Reviewer(s). If the Workforce Systems Oversight committee decides to recommend certification to the GCWED, the Committee's decision will be shared with the GCWED for its action at the next GCWED meeting.

h.   The GCWED's certification decision will be made and formally shared with the applying system within 15 days following submission of the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee's formal, written recommendation at the GCWED meeting.

Because the system certification review process is designed to support continuous improvement and to ensure the provision of needed technical assistance – giving systems the support they need to achieve the standards – it is not expected that systems will formally appeal the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee's certification recommendations or GCWED's certification decision with any frequency.

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However, should a system have a concern with the process followed by the Reviewer(s) or the Committee in making a decision about system certification, or the GCWED's certification decision, it would have an avenue for appeal to the GCWED or the GCWED's state-level designee. It is important to emphasize that the GCWED would only be involved in an appeals process if a system were to question the certification recommendation and decision-making process, not the decision. Should a system not meet the standards for certification, it may re-apply in the next certification cycle.

The following chart outlines the steps that a local system must follow to apply for and become certified.

Figure 2: Oklahoma Workforce Development System Certification Process Flow Chart

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APPENDICES

- **Appendix A: New Day, New Way Overview -**
  http://www.ok.gov/okworks/documents/New%20Day%20New%20Way%20Overview.doc

- **Appendix B: Talking Points to Present to Agency Directors, Managers, and Supervisors -**
  http://www.ok.gov/okworks/documents/Talking%20Points%20to%20Present%20to%20Agency%20Heads%20in%20Local%20Areas.doc

- **Appendix C: Framework -**
  http://www.ok.gov/okworks/documents/OK%20Framework%20Draft%20for%20the%20orientation%20session.doc

- **Appendix D: Standards and Measures -**
  http://www.ok.gov/okworks/documents/Oklahoma%20Workforce%20System%20Certification%20Standards%20and%20Measures.doc

- **Appendix E: Self-Assessment**
  http://www.ok.gov/okworks/documents/Self%20Assessment%20Tool.doc

- **Appendix F: Post-Orientation Next Steps Forms**

  o **Team Action Planning Form -**
    http://www.ok.gov/okworks/documents/Action%20Planning%20Form.doc

  o **Action Planning Step 1 – Moving the System Forward -**
    http://www.ok.gov/okworks/documents/Action%20planning%20step%201%20move%20forward%20form.doc

  o **Action Planning Step 2 – Orienting Staff -**
    http://www.ok.gov/okworks/documents/Action%20planning%20step%202%20orientation%20planning%20form%20(2).doc

  o **Action Planning Step 3 - Finalizing the Team Structure -**
    http://www.ok.gov/okworks/documents/Action%20Planning%20Form%20step%203%20Finalizee%20Team%20Structure%20Activity%20Form.doc

  o **Action Planning Step 4 – Briefing Missing Teammates -**
    http://www.ok.gov/okworks/documents/Action%20Planning%20Form%20Step%204.doc

- **Appendix G: Service-Mapping Process Templates –**

  o **Job Seeker Services -**
    http://www.ok.gov/okworks/documents/Service%20mapping%20process%20template%20-%20Job%20Seeker%20services.xls

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- o **Business Services -** http://www.ok.gov/okworks/documents/Service%20mapping%20process%20template%20-%20business%20services.xls

- **Appendix H: Instructions to complete the Service-Mapping Process Templates -** http://www.ok.gov/okworks/documents/Instructions%20to%20complete%20the%20mapping%20templates.doc

- **Appendix I: Service Matrix Template –**

  - o **Job Seeker Services -** http://www.ok.gov/okworks/documents/Service%20Map%20Template%20-%20Job%20Seeker%20Services.xls

  - o **Business Services –** http://www.ok.gov/okworks/documents/Service%20Map%20Template%20-%20Business%20Services.xls

- **Appendix J: Certification Flow Chart -** http://www.ok.gov/okworks/documents/Flow%20Chart%20of%20Certifcation%20Steps.doc

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