**Business Services Plan**

**APPROVED:** October 11, 2022

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** October 11, 2022

**PURPOSE**

The Mississippi Valley Workforce Development Board (MVWDB) provides this plan as guidance for the provision of Business Engagement and Business Services in the Mississippi Valley Workforce Area (MVWA). The purpose of this plan is to outline the strategic vision of business service provision in the MVWA and American Job Centers (AJC) (also called Iowa*WORKS* Centers), which includes all mandated WIOA partners in providing services to business customers.

**background**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is to align employment, education, and training programs to strengthen the United States labor market. In order to accomplish this objective WIOA mandates six program components which need to be consistently offered by AJCs: Youth Workforce Investment Activities, Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities, Adult Education and Literacy, Employment Services, and Vocational Rehabilitation. As defined in WIOA Section 3(13), the core program provision is derived from the following legislation:

* WIOA Title I Subtitle B Chapters 2 and 3 (relating to Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker employment and training activities)
* WIOA Title II (relating to Adult Education and Literacy activities)
* WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Act Sections 1 through 13 (relating to employment services)
* WIOA Title IV Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Title I (relating to Vocational Rehabilitation services)

**Purpose of Business Services**

According to WIOA Section 108(b)(4)(B) business services are intended to promote, market, connect, and provide access to initiatives such as:

* Work Opportunity Tax Credit
* Worker Adjustment Retraining Notice (WARN)
* Rapid Response
* Federal Bonding
* Incumbent worker training programs
* On-the-job training programs
* Customized training programs
* Industry and sector strategies
* Career pathways initiatives
* Utilization of effective business intermediaries
* Registered Apprenticeships
* Recruiting employers to AJCs
* Connecting job seekers and employers by facilitating relationships

# PLAN

Through the Iowa*WORKS* Centers the core partners and other co-located entities must develop, offer, and deliver quality business services that assist businesses and industry sectors in overcoming the challenges of recruiting, retaining, and developing talent for the regional economy. To support area employers and industry sectors most effectively, staff (including designated partner program staff) must:

* Have a clear understanding of industry skill needs
* Identify appropriate strategies for assisting employers and coordinate business services activities across Iowa*WORKS* partner programs and local economic development agencies, as appropriate
* Incorporate an integrated and aligned business services strategy among Iowa*WORKS* partners to present a unified voice for the American Job Center in its communications with employers.

## WIOA LOCAL PLAN REQUIREMENT

WIOA mandates local areas to establish and develop relationships and networks with employers and their intermediaries; convene or implement industry or sector partnerships; and may also provide other business services and strategies that meet the workforce development needs of their area employers in accordance with partner programs’ statutory requirements. All of these strategies must be reflected in the Local Workforce Development Area WIOA Local Plan. MVWDB’slocal plan must include a description of the strategies and services used in the local area to:

* Facilitate engagement of employers in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations
* Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area
* Better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development
* Strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs
* Describe strategies and services that will be used in the local area to implement initiatives such as incumbent worker training, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathway initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries.

**MVWDB GOALS**

The goals of business engagement are to:

* Increase awareness of services and resources provided through the workforce system
* Increase the likelihood of employers hiring job seekers through the workforce system
* Create and strengthen career pathways aligned to business and industry demand
* Provide business intelligence to employers, intermediaries, and partners to ensure the workforce is relevant and useful
* Ensure strong talent pipelines for demand occupations that allow business to grow and be successful
* Establish Mississippi Valley Iowa*WORKS* as an integral partner that adds value to regional economic development efforts by making connections to workforce strategies, solutions, and cutting-edge labor market research and data.

To help achieve these goals MVWDB will increase business engagement by delivering value to our business customers by:

* Using data to effectively identify, engage and serve our businesses
* Through integrated service delivery
* Reducing duplication of services
* Forming sector- based partnerships to address the needs of regional industries
* Investing in technology and professional development.

**BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

The MVWDB will establish a Business Committee to provide guidance and support to the WIOA partners in ensuring implementation of this plan. To ensure a strategic and focused approach to providing coordinated and consistent services to businesses the Business Committee will consist of cross-agency, cross county and industry members. This committee will convene regularly to provide a strategic direction, evaluate results, provide technical assistance, and recommend changes to program design to enhance service delivery. Roles of the Business Committee include but are not limited to:

* Evaluate, identify, and establish appropriate information technology solutions to assist in effective delivery of business services
* Encourage local workforce agencies to participate on the Business Services Teams.
* Convene sector partnerships
* Oversee and manage the Incumbent Worker Training Grant Program and other work-based learning options in MVWA under WIOA.
* Evaluate promising practices in business services delivery across Iowa and the United States and communicate those practices to local business services teams.
* Analyze and address barriers to collaboration between state, regional, and local business services teams.
* Map business solution assets and provide training to business services staff on standardizing outreach and marketing materials and how to mobilize these resources including peer to peer learning opportunities.
* Develop a tool and process for evaluating business customer satisfaction.
* Seek additional funding opportunities to support Business Service delivery.

**ROLE OF WIOA PARTNERS**

Interagency collaboration, forming partnerships, and leveraging resources will be a vital aspect of Iowa’s success in meeting business’ workforce development needs. WIOA partners will continue to support a continued focus on branding the one-stop system, delivering a universal message to identify the one-stop system, and establishing standardized services.

**INTEGRATION**

Full integration of business services is critical to achieving a high performing workforce development system. MVWDB is committed to the principles of Customer-Centered Design and innovation in its service delivery strategy, including virtual products and services. The responsive integration of these service delivery methods creates better outcomes for the dual customers of workforce development, the jobseeker and business community.

An integrated approach to business services will lead to improved skills, credentials and employment attainment in areas driven by business demand. In total, this effort in conjunction with efforts by economic development activities are expected to enhance and grow Iowa’s economic advantage in both recruiting and retaining businesses.

The Integrated Business Services Self-Assessment, provided as Attachment B to this plan, is a self-assessment to be completed by the local Business Service Teams annually by the start of each program year. This tool was created to help the local area teams drill down into how integrated and effective the business services are currently, and to determine where enhancements can be made. The assessment tool will assist the MVWDB as part of their strategic planning process. The tool is designed to be used as a framework to focus the conversation between workforce partners on how they will address the challenge of becoming more responsive to businesses as a collective unit and will help local areas determine what a “high-performing” integrated business services team looks like.

## Business Services Team Structure and Function

MVWDB is required to have a unified business services team as described in the local Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The local Business Services Teams (BST) at minimum should include all partners who identified as providing business services in the local MOU. Including but not limited to WIOA core partners, including Wagner-Peyser, Title I Adult/DW, Adult Education and Literacy, Vocational Rehabilitation, and other workforce partners. The core partners in MVWA will each designate at least one staff member that will serve on the BST. The goal of business services staff is to assist businesses in developing the long-term strength of their workforce. This is generally accomplished by considering the specific needs of the business, as expressed by the employer. Coordinated efforts should be focused on creating a streamlined business process and preventing duplicative services and contacts to businesses. When meeting with employers it is best for business service staff to carefully consider the specific needs of a company rather than rely on simply listing services.

## SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT APPROACH

Per the One Stop Certification Standards: “the Center’s integrated business services team shares information across partners to better serve business customers, streamlines outreach to and communications with businesses, and utilizes a single point of contact approach with business customers to represent the integrated business services team.” The single point of contact is not intended to be “one individual” responsible for all relationships in the MVWA through which all businesses must go to access workforce services. All members of the business services teams are expected to create these relationships with businesses in the community in a coordinated and targeted manner.

A "single point of contact protocol" means that there is no wrong door through which a business customer enters. Any team member that initiates or receives the initial contact either directly works to meet the need or makes a referral on behalf of the customer and ensures that follow up has occurred. Development of a referral form and shared spreadsheet or tracking system is necessary. A team lead should be identified to include in outreach materials and website.

# ASSET MAPPING

Asset mapping identifies resources and provides MVWDB with an inventory of key resources within the local service delivery area.

***Business Services*** – Attachment A provides an asset mapping tool to determine what business services are provided by each partner in the MVWA. This tool includes required Business Services outlined under WIOA, in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), outlined in the local MOU, promising HR recommendations from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and additional businesses services the MVWDB has identified. This tool will be completed annually and will identify where gaps in services exist, additional workforce partners that are needed to complete our service delivery and areas where further collaboration and coordination can occur across partner programs.

***Community Partners****:* An asset mapping list includes entities with which the business service staff already has relationships, such as: local governments; chambers of commerce; local, regional, or state economic development entities; financial institutions; and community-based organizations. The MVWDB can use these resources to form a strategy to promote the economy within the local area; this coordination will rely heavily on the expertise provided by the business service staff.

# WIOA PERFORMANCE MEASURES

# The State of Iowa has selected the following two benchmarks which will be reported to the U.S. Department of Labor and State Workforce Development Board. A successful business service team is the driving force behind a One-Stop center meeting, and exceeding, these goals. These measurements include:

1. Repeat business customer rate measures the percentage of employers who receive core services more than once in the last three recording periods.

This measure is intended to demonstrate that a business is satisfied with the services they received. By continually seeking out the assistance of business service staff, a company has indicated that the consultation carried out a recruitment strategy that was beneficial to their staffing needs.

1. Employer penetration rate measures the percentage of employers using services in the State.

The percentage of employers seeking out the services of business services teams is a method to analyze how effective the services offered by American Job Centers are when compared to other comparable job recruitment services. This illustrates how successful business service staff is in maintaining good relationships with employers and whether or not this reputation is felt across industries within a respective area.

# REPORTING

The One Stop Operator or designee will complete a monthly report to provide to the Business Committee and this report should track the following activities:

* Number of businesses served - Tracked by establishment
* Number of new business contacts
* Type of services provided
* Number of business referrals
* Business Service Team meeting activities and events
* Updates on the below listed activities.

In addition, annually at the beginning of each program year the MVWDB will confirm the local BSTs have the following in place and are committed to:

* A shared vision and strategy for business services and aligned with the current LWDB WIOA Plan
* Committed and planned team professional development opportunities
* A single point of contact and referral protocol documented
* A Written Communication Plan that includes:
	+ A unified approach that is focused on the workforce system instead of a program specific approach
	+ An outreach plan based on sector strategies identified in the LWDB WIOA plan
	+ Identification of locally available resources, including channels for outreach, and how they will be used
	+ The role of each partner in performing outreach activities
	+ A method for determining effectiveness of local outreach efforts
* A description of additional partnerships the MVWDB should pursue to assist in communications and outreach to businesses including business roundtables, business advisory councils, or existing business programs through economic development entities
* Standardized timeframes to respond to business inquiries and subsequent contact, in order to deliver specialized and collaborative solutions to meet business customer needs
* A documented process to ensure partner staff within the AJC are aware of the protocol for business services referrals
* A Business Satisfaction Survey as developed by the One Stop Operator and the Business Committee
* MVWDB business service partners must have clear, convenient, and easily accessible content and outreach materials (including web-based content) for business customers that provides:
	+ A list of all business products and services; and
	+ Contact information for a business to contact through the identified “single point of contact” protocol

*Note: The above activities will be incorporated into the next MOU development process.*

**Attachment A - IowaWORKS Business Services Asset Mapping Tool**

This list of business services was derived from CFR § 361.435, CFR § 652.2, the local MOU, and OPM HR recommendations. This tool is to be used by all partners that identified as providing business services in the MOU in Mississippi Valley Workforce Area. This data will be used to identify gaps in service delivery, create areas for further collaboration and coordination and used to assist the board in its strategic planning process.

**Instructions**

For all business services that have been provided through your program in the last year place a black "X" in the cell, for those services that your program has provided in the past but has not provided in the last year place a red “X” in the cell.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Business Services Offered  | Bd  | T1 | T2 | T3 | T4 | IDB  |
| 1 | Job Posting  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2 | Staff assisted job postings |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 | Basic Recruitment and applicant pre-screening assistance |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4 | Customized screening and referral of qualified participants in training services to employers |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5 | Conduct interviews and create interview questions for employers  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6 | Local applicant pools search for clients that meet the employers’ minimum qualifications  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7 | Do employers use Iowa*WORKS* Centers for recruiting and interviewing job applicants |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8 | Provide basic LMI data |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9 | Provide customized labor market information for specific employers, sectors, industries or clusters |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10 | Assistance with Registered Apprenticeships |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11 | Create Standards for Registered Apprenticeship  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12 | Development of Career Pathways (not placing participant in pathway) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 13 | Assist with Job Fairs  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 14 | Customized recruitment events for individual businesses  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 15 | Promote IowaWORKS events  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 16 | Marketing of IowaWORKS business services to appropriate area employers |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 17 | Perform Outreach to Chambers and Economic Development |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 18 | Serve on a Chamber board or committee |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 19 | Serve on an Economic Dev. Board or committee  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 20 | Provide workshops for businesses |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 21 | Incumbent Worker Training  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 22 | Customized Training  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 23 | On the Job Training  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 24 | Work Experiences  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 25 | Internships  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 26 | Develop, convene, or implement sector partnerships |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 27 | Attend sector or partnership board meetings  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 28 | Host business networking meetings  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 29 | Host roundtable events  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 30 | Provide Layoff Aversion Activities  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 31 | Provide Feasibility studies to assess the needs of and options for at-risk firms |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 32 | Create business needs assessments |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 33 | Analyze business needs assessments |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 34 | Provide Rapid Response Activities  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 35 | HR consultation with Writing/reviewing job descriptions and employee handbooks |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 36 | Developing performance evaluation and personnel policies |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 37 | Creating orientation sessions for new workers |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 38 | Honing employer job interview techniques for efficiency and compliance |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 39 | Analyzing employee turnover and barriers to the hiring process  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 40 | Assistance in identifying family friendly benefits  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 41 | Provide information regarding assistive technology and communication accommodations |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 42 | Create job accommodations using assistive technology  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 43 | Explain labor and employment laws to help employers comply with discrimination, wage/hour, and safety/health regulations |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 44 | Provide information and assistance to employers to access WOTC  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 45 | Provide information and assistance to employers to access Federal Bonding  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 46 | Provide information on business loans  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 47 | Referrals to other community organizations  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 48 | Evaluate diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in workforce plans and devise plans to further goals |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 49 | Conduct dives into organization’s climate and culture to identify organizational strengths and opportunities for improvements. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 50 | Devise recruitment and branding strategies to more effectively attract diverse highly qualified candidate pools. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 51 | Use social media to promote program specific business services  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 52 | Have program specific business services outreach materials  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 53 | Have IowaWORKS business services outreach materials  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 54 | Have individual and team goals for current program year |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 55 | Have local business staff strategic plan |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 56 | Member of ECI |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 57 | Participate in ECI events  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 58 | Promote ECI events  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Attachment B – Integrated Business Services**

**Self-Assessment Tool**

A self-assessment helps local workforce systems drill down into how integrated and effective their business services are currently and where enhancements can be made. This tool should be completed annually to show progress toward the system goals and performance.

**Introduction**

Most communities understand the importance of providing a more coordinated set of talent development solutions for their business. Yet so many still struggle with effectively integrating business services across workforce, education, and economic development. As a result, we are still approaching businesses and their talent needs in silos and only reaching a small share of them. This tool challenges our local area to ask themselves: Can we be more responsive to businesses as a collective unit and how can we change what we do to make it happen? The self-assessment is made up of a number of indicators that together begin to demonstrate what a “high-performing” integrated business services system may look like. This tool is designed as a framework to focus the conversation that our local area should be having as we address this challenge.

**Directions**

1. Work as a team to complete the self-assessment. For each of the factors in the sections that follow, select a rating from 1 - 5 that reflects your/your team’s perspective on where the local area stands. Each team member may choose to complete the assessment individually and then convene to compare answers. Or you may decide to complete it together as a team.
2. Leave plenty of time to engage in an honest discussion about each indicator and to provide thoughtful ideas for addressing potential strategies for strengthening each indicators score.
3. For each indicator identify a score of 1-5 how integrated the workforce system is. 1 = isolation, 2 = communication, 3 = coordination, 4 = collaboration, 5 = integration.
4. For each score identify specific strategies that can be taken by the system to move toward full integration. These should be tangible steps to show progress toward achievement of the long-term goals.

**Vision**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Score | How could this be strengthened? |
| 1. local vision exists for coordinated and aligned business engagement/services.
 |  |  |
| 1. The vision is inclusive of all partners that play a role in the local talent pipeline from economic development, education, and workforce development. This includes core and key system partners from vocational rehabilitation and adult education to veteran’s services etc.
 |  |  |
| 1. The notion of shared business client ownership and accountability is institutionalized across agencies/programs. Key to this: partners buy into the notion that working collectively expands the breadth of services offered to business which is a positive for all.
 |  |  |

**Demand Planning**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Score | How could this be strengthened? |
| 1. We have access to quality regionalized labor market information (LMI) and review the data regularly.
 |  |  |
| 1. All of our key business reps have a clear understanding of the region’s overall business and economic climate, including key industries, business lifecycles, workforce trends and needs.
 |  |  |
| 1. Partners use shared LMI data as they approach and work with business—there is consensus among partners on key target industries, critical occupations, etc.
 |  |  |
| 1. Business intelligence—or tracking business engagement activity—is managed across key partners through a Customer Relationship Management (or related) system. Partners have access to this information and know how to use it
 |  |  |
| 1. Business outreach representatives (across partners) share intelligence and coordinate and strategize follow- up. with ability to connect businesses to a full range of partner services.
 |  |  |

**Engaging with Businesses and Delivering Solutions**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Score | How could this be strengthened? |
| 1. Roles and responsibilities, as it relates to business engagement and follow up, are understood and embraced by all partners. Coordination planning across partners occurs regularly outside of business services team meetings.
 |  |  |
| 1. Our business outreach reps have the skills in building meaningful partnerships with businesses, both individually and in the context of multi-business industry partnerships. Includes ability to work with businesses to effectively validate and dig deep on talent needs
 |  |  |
| 1. Outreach representatives are adept at collecting key business needs/information when meeting with business, maximizing their contact and providing partners with referrals for the sake of all-encompassing solutions, this minimizes touchpoints with business limiting their “visit fatigue”
 |  |  |
| 1. We have an understanding, from working with key businesses, the natural progression/mobility of workers in all targeted industries/occupations (i.e., career ladders/lattices)
 |  |  |
| 1. We have trust with businesses and key target industries— and an understanding of how to leverage resources—to build innovative business-focused programs/services including: work-based learning, apprenticeships, and other recruitment, hiring, training, and transition services.
 |  |  |
| 1. Our coordinated business services represent “the whole” when in front of business. Follow up regularly includes bringing in the partner/resources to address the solution.
 |  |  |
| 1. Common forms and business needs assessments have been created and are used across partners.
 |  |  |
| 1. A referral process has been developed and implemented across programs.
 |  |  |
| 1. a “single point of contact” approach has been developed and implemented.
 |  |  |
| 1. Standardized timeframes to respond to business inquiries and subsequent contact, in order to deliver specialized and collaborative solutions to meet business customer needs has been developed.
 |  |  |
| 1. A documented process to ensure partner staff within the AJC are aware of the protocol for business services referrals
 |  |  |

**Outreach and Communication**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Score | How could this be strengthened? |
| 1. There is an adopted shared message for communicating to the business community the vision and strengths of the local integrated business services system.
 |  |  |
| 1. Services being presented to businesses—from across partners—are not siloed or menu-driven but focus on delivering solutions to expressed business needs.
 |  |  |
| 1. Messaging centers around concepts important to businesses including how these services will impact profitability and productivity.
 |  |  |
| 1. There is a consolidated brand, and it is embraced by all partners serving businesses.
 |  |  |
| 1. There is Iowa*WORKS* business services outreach materials and not merely individual program materials that are distributed to businesses.
 |  |  |
| 1. A Written Communication Plan has been developed and is being followed.
 |  |  |

**Sustainability and Continuous Improvement**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Score | How could this be strengthened? |
| 1. Coordinated cross-partnership measures (i.e., quantifiable goals that likely go beyond WIOA measures) have been developed around engaging and serving businesses
 |  |  |
| 1. A local structure is in place (e.g., cross-partner committees, dedicated teams) to guide, implement and sustain this work.
 |  |  |
| 1. An effective staffing structure exists to support both industry sector partnerships (i.e., local industry-wide business engagement) and the day-to-day business outreach operations. For some this may mean the use of outside partners to support the industry wide work.
 |  |  |
| 1. Cross-agency training is in place to ensure all partners are aware of the solutions inherent in this type of approach.
 |  |  |
| 1. Leadership buy-in exists across partnerships for demand-driven, coordinated services and shared performance goals & outcomes.
 |  |  |