

# The Future of WorkSource

Input from employers, job seekers, and service providers on the need for and vision of an effective workforce system in Oregon

**June 2014**

## North Coast Region

Contains summaries of the following

- Statewide Assessment
- Seaside Regional Forum

A project of  
**The Oregon Employment Department and  
Local Workforce Investment Boards**

Report prepared by  
**The Center for Public Service, Portland State University, and  
Scruggs & Associates LLC**

# The Future of WorkSource

## Background

The Future of WorkSource is a joint project of the Oregon Employment Department and Oregon's seven Local Workforce Investment Boards. The objective of the project is to examine the effectiveness of WorkSource—what the system needs to provide in order to have value and impact to its customers, how these customer needs vary region by region, and how state and local providers can work more collaboratively to provide integrated and seamless services to employers and job seekers.

To understand where to focus attention and how to deliver services more effectively, the project obtained input from employers and partners across the state. From March 18 to May 10, 2014, the project held four local employer forums (Hermiston, Klamath Falls, Ontario and The Dalles) and eight larger regional forums (Eugene, Florence, La Grande, Medford, Redmond, Seaside, Salem, Wilsonville) that brought together employers, business groups, and workforce providers and partners. In total, more than 700 people participated in these forums.

Prior to the forums, the project surveyed a sample of job seekers that used WorkSource during the fall of 2013. From approximately 5,700 surveys sent, there were 912 responses (870 complete), which represented a 15% completion rate. This information was compared to forum input to understand the dynamics and connections between the supply side (job seekers) and demand side (employers) of the workforce system.

This report is a compilation of these activities, summarizing the direct input from stakeholders as well as regional and statewide analysis trends and perceptions. This report is divided into three parts:

- A statewide synopsis that combines all aspects of the project into a synthesis of statewide trends and regional differences.
- Summaries of regional forums and rural employer sessions.
- Appendix of job seeker survey data and analysis containing statewide and regional analysis of job seekers use and perceptions of the WorkSource system.

The information from this project will be used for in-depth discussion at both the state and local levels to improve services, responsiveness and the positive impact of the WorkSource system including:

- Strategic conversations and assessments, individually and collectively, with the Oregon Employment Department, Community Colleges and Workforce Development, and Department of Human Services,
- Planning and program development for local workforce investment boards (LWIBs),
- Closer coordination of services between LWIBs and multiple state agencies,
- Input to Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB) and the state's workforce redesign effort,
- Coordination with community colleges, individually and collectively, on degree and certificate curricula and sector-specific training opportunities,
- Conversations with the legislature about workforce policy and resource allocations, and
- Conversations with the Higher Education Coordinating Council (HECC).

The report and analysis was compiled by the Center for Public Services in the Hatfield School of Government, Portland State University in collaboration with Scruggs & Associates LLC. The Center for Public Services provides research, education and consulting services to public and nonprofit organizations to improve governance, civic capacity and public management. Contributors include Patricia Scruggs, consulting staff; Catherine LaTourette, faculty; Thomas Swafford, associate staff; Deborah Kirkland, associate staff; and graduate students Caroline Zavitkovski, Valerie Walker, Bonnie Crawford, Ariana Denney and Troyler Fultz.

# PART I: Statewide Assessment

This section of the report synthesizes what we heard from businesses, job seekers, service providers and workforce partners around the state--unedited perceptions about the WorkSource system as well as the broader community infrastructure that supports workforce development. While additional details can be found in the regional write-ups and job seeker survey analysis, this summary provides highlights and analyzes the common state themes and regional differences.

## FORUM SUMMARY: Employer Highlights

Employers are the primary customers of WorkSource—the demand side of the system that must drive how services are developed and delivered. This section highlights three key discussions with employers; Understanding the workforce trends they are experiencing, how those trends translate into value-added services, and where WorkSource resources could be allocated or deployed to best meet with value.

### Employer trends and concerns common throughout the state

#### **Many applicants lack basic skills**

Employers report basic skills are absent from a wide range of candidates from entry-level positions to college graduates. Writing and communication skills are among the most common missing skills, along with basic and applied math such as the ability to read a tape measure or making change from a sales transaction.

#### **Applicants are missing other base skills critical to many Oregon industries**

Employers consider customer service, basic knowledge of computers and common office software, and familiarity with standard workplace protocols (appropriate attire, punctuality, etc.) as basic skills. They observe older applicants often lack computer skills and have difficulty marketing their skills or experience. Employers also notice significant intergenerational workplace challenges with regards to workplace expectations, especially between millennials and baby-boomers. This suggests a need to better develop the talent of management in addressing those issues effectively.

#### **Applicants lack technical and vocational skills**

Employers in a wide array of industries, especially trades and manufacturing, note a significant gap in vocational and technical skills from previous generations. This included a range of skills from being able to read a tape measure or instrument panel to having basic mechanical skills or understanding of what constitutes quality control. Problem-solving skills that are valuable in many occupations, including college degreed jobs, are also missing. Businesses noted a lack in vocational education, statewide and nationally, and the focus on students to be college bound has hurt the competitiveness of many businesses, especially those in rural communities.

#### **Employers are seeing far less early work experience and work readiness skills among job applicants under age 25**

Applicants under 25 years of age tend to have fewer work experiences than in previous generations. Employers are seeing more college graduates with low work readiness skills, even in simple matters such as showing up on time. Employers are experiencing lower quality in younger employees' work and/or an attitude of "just doing enough to get by." They perceive the education system as not including job readiness as an important aspect of learning.

#### **Use of staffing agencies and temp-to-hire continue to rise**

Because of a lower overall quality of applicants, many employers are using staffing services to find employees through temp-to-hire situations where potential new hires are tested for skills and fit with the workplace. While this is more expensive for employers on a per person basis, it saves them money

in the long run due to the high percent of temps that do not make it through the trial period. If they do fit, however, turnover is greatly reduced and employers are more willing to make investments in training.

#### **Employers rely heavily on different forms of work-based training**

In addition to using temp-to-hire as a way to find employees with the right mix of skills, employers noted they are doing more basic skill training just to bring a new hire to an entry-level skill set. This basic training, combined with business or skill specific training means the return on training investment (training ROI) continues to take longer before a new employee is productive. Once an employee is up to speed, employers prefer to promote from within to maintain this investment. This results in a high demand and preference for incumbent worker training to “skill-up” existing employees to replace workers that have either left or retired.

#### **Employers are struggling to use apprenticeship programs**

The recession and pressures to lean operations have left many companies, especially trades and manufacturing, without adequate journey level staff to take on the number of apprentices that they need. Furthermore, a significant number of businesses reported that age restrictions on the use of equipment prevented them from attracting students into apprenticeships or pre-apprentice training.

#### **Employers are concerned with retirement and succession planning**

As the economy improves, employers are starting to see more of their older employees consider retirement. With little job growth over the past five years, there are fewer people in the pipeline to move up within the organization and recruitment from the outside is costly or difficult. This is especially a concern with smaller and rural businesses.

#### **Structural cliffs in government assistance hurt lower income workers**

Employers in all regions commented that unemployment insurance payments and wrap-around assistance such as food stamps or transportation assistance were an “all or nothing” program making it difficult for job seekers to take an entry-level job and risk losing the support they needed as they transitioned back into work. This meant that qualified applicants often declined jobs reducing the applicant pool even further for employers.

### **Additional Rural Trends**

Employers in rural regions face additional challenges in finding, training and retaining workers. These challenges include:

- A **high portion of seasonal jobs** means many workers hold multiple jobs in a given year and rely on temporary seasonal unemployment to make it through leaner parts of the work year.
- **Geographically disbursed workforce and employers** often mean longer commute times, even for lower-wage jobs. Combined with seasonal industries, transportation costs are often a significant barrier to keeping employees.
- Employers having to go **outside the region to find professional, technical and management level** positions. Even after casting a wide net, recruiting mid to high-level occupations to rural communities is difficult, especially when there is a trailing spouse or partner who would also need employment. Often compensation packages are more costly and retention rates are low.
- A lack of a local qualified workforce encourages companies to steal good employees from one another—despite knowing this is not good for the long term regional economy.
- **Drug use**, especially methamphetamine, was noted as serious problem in eastern and southern Oregon with many applicants failing drug testing. The ability to address this issue as part of an overall employment strategy will be critical.

Rural employers also had a more **difficult time accessing WorkSource services due to the distance between the company and WorkSource offices**. It was suggested that for specialized or critical services

that a portion of WorkSource staff travel either directly to businesses or to partner offices throughout the region or that more services are offered in a virtual fashion.

## What Employers Value and Want from WorkSource Services

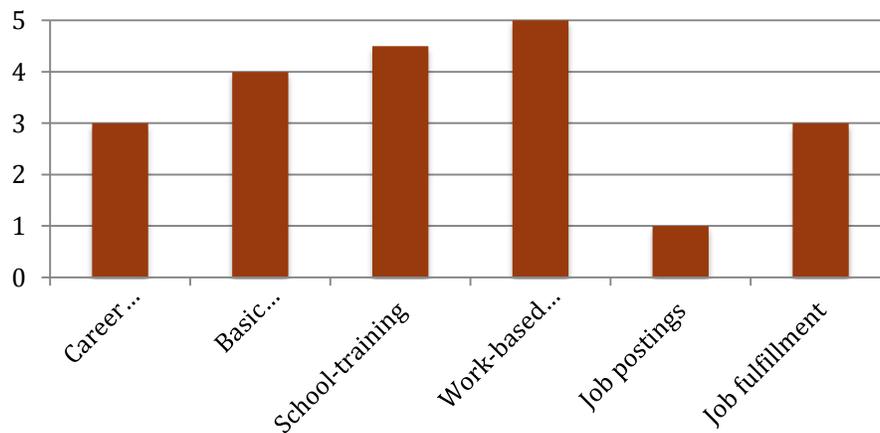
Employers view the WorkSource system as a set of inter-related services, where more efficiencies and impact could be gained through enhanced coordination and improved marketing of available services. To achieve this vision, businesses want WorkSource to have **a broader pool of applicants with a wider range of skills and education**. For example, they suggested community colleges and universities put graduates into the WorkSource system. With this broader set of applicants, WorkSource **could provide more services to a wider array of job seekers and employers**, rather than the perception that most resources are being spent on a low percentage of the unemployed with significant barriers to employment. These expanded services would include **significantly more training throughout a worker's employment history** and earlier focus on youth work experience to get Oregon's workforce off to a good start.

Employers envision **data systems that go beyond job matching**, which analyze regional and state employment trends and manage customer relationships in such a fashion that **informs the types of regional training or job preparation services needed**. With more robust information, employers imagine WorkSource **better connected with regional and state economic development organizations** to be more proactive and strategic about business expansion and recruitment efforts. Armed with better information and improved links to the regional economy, WorkSource's **connection to K-20** could be more effective in promoting the jobs and skills needed to grow local economies.

### Allocation of resources

The forums asked employers to allocate where they would like to see WorkSource resources allocated by key six functions. Each employer allocated \$100 in \$5 increments across these functions. The results were then totaled and adjusted to a scale of 1-5, where 5 represented an area that employers wanted to see significantly more resources, and 1 was an area where they saw little value.

**Employers' desired allocation of WorkSource resources**



**Training stood out as a highly valued and underserved function with WorkSource.** The top three immediate issues for employers across the state were:

- Increasing **incumbent worker** training to help businesses maintain critical occupations and fill the increasing number of retirement jobs.

- Enhancing **basic skills training** that improve the quality of the current applicant pool and for which WorkSource should verify self-reported skills and credentials prior to a job referral.
- Expanding **on-the-job training, apprenticeships**, and **career-technical education pathways** to get new workers in the door and up to speed as quickly as possible.

There were also several overall **policy issues** that employers felt were limiting their ability to find, train or retain employees. Employers encouraged WorkSource and OED to examine:

- The **structural cliff of unemployment payments and other government funded services** that end abruptly at the time of employment and do not help workers with limited means transition into new jobs.
- **BOLI restrictions** on the use of machinery and equipment that prevent youth from obtaining early exposure (and interest) in trades and vocational occupations and journey/apprentice ratios that limit the number of apprentices business can have.

There were four high value services that employers identified as foundational services that maintained the pipeline of qualified workers. These were:

- Expanding WorkSource’s **customized recruitment** process and developing industry sector specialists as the program expands.
- Advocating for and working with K-12 and community colleges to expand **career and technical (“vocational”) education and skills centers, and to establish trade schools**.
- Enhancing access to **youth programs that provide early work experience and job readiness skills**, ensuring that these programs reach the broadest base of all youth, not just those at risk or high performing.
- Focusing **career planning and job preparation services on opportunities in regional industries**; Sharing this information with K-12, community college and other educational career counselors as well as their students so that information on a wide array of occupations (not just college-bound) is current and consistently promoted.

In terms of other value-added functions, employers wanted WorkSource to:

- Have a more **consistent brand** and overcome the outdated perception of the “unemployment” department and strive toward an image where all workers, employed, unemployed or under-employed would come to be connected with appropriate training or employment.
- Establish a **concierge type system** where there is no “wrong door” to enter. Where WorkSource partners have a clear understanding of each other’s programs and can share this information enabling employers to continually meet with or provide information to multiple organizations within the WorkSource system at one time.
- Utilize the information collected by WorkSource databases not just for job placement and referrals, but as a customer relationship management (**CRM**) **system** for proactive analysis that can develop forward thinking training and job preparation services and better two-way communication with employers.
- Assist with **intergenerational workplace dynamics**; helping employers understand how to accommodate style/expectation differences and helping workers understand the types of difference that are non-negotiable in certain workplaces.
- Provide **HR and succession planning** help to small businesses, as well as helping these companies with basic HR related needs like how to write good job descriptions or screen and hire employees. In rural areas this would mean having a specialist travel throughout the region.

*At the end of the day, employers defined WorkSource’s success as supporting a workforce that helps businesses grow, to hire new employees and sustain competitiveness by investing in **continuous skill development**.*

## FORUM SUMMARY: Provider/Partner Highlights

The provider section of the regional forums started with the end in mind—specifically asking what an effective WorkSource system would look when it was adequately aligned with employer and job seeker needs. The forums then discussed how to reach this vision by identifying what was working and where innovation was needed. Many of the vision statements and suggestions for innovation were very consistent throughout the regions. Common themes and desired programs or services are described below.

### A Shared Vision and Key Services of a High Performing WorkSource System

#### ***Acting as a cohesive system***

- Having a more uniform branding of WorkSource with
  - Consistent use of WorkSource as the overall brand name,
  - Co-location of service providers, and
  - Joint marketing of partner services, all under the WorkSource brand.
- Establishing a system where partner services are well known to each other and those services are better coordinated among providers, appearing seamless to the customer by:
  - Sharing databases and linked program information,
  - Greater standardization of program eligibility, and
  - More consistent training and joint on boarding of staff.
- Developing a common set of customer-focused metrics that are used to set program metrics within individual agencies or organizations.

#### ***Focusing on high value, high impact services***

- Allocating more resources toward work-based training that enhance employee productivity and helps employers to be more competitive and positioned for growth. Such training must accommodate unemployed, under-employed and incumbent workers.
- Expanding customized recruitment, which includes verifying skills and credentials of candidates and connecting employer information to job preparation and career planning services.
- Having a multi-tiered triage process for job seekers (rather than a one size fits all welcome process) that could quickly identify customer needs and the level of service required so those with fewer needs could quickly find assistance and those with greater needs could receive more coaching.

#### ***Being more proactive and customer driven***

- Developing a more systematic way to work with regional industry sectors and business groups to identify potential hiring needs as well as basic, critical and hard to find skills that are common among groups of employers.
- Establishing methods by which hiring trends and critical skills can be more systematically analyzed by region and industry. Using this information to:
  - Develop cohort-training programs for skills common to an industry or multiple employers (such as customer service and basic office software skill for hospitality and related industries).
  - More complete and robust profiles of local industries that include desired skills and descriptions of the work environment and workplace expectations that can be used in career planning and job preparation services.
- Having stronger collaboration between small business development centers and chambers or business groups to help businesses, especially small businesses, be more strategic about HR and succession planning.

#### ***Helping youth become job and career ready***

- Reinvesting in vocational and career/technical education in high schools and community colleges, stressing to students and counselors the importance of these skills not just for jobs in manufacturing or the trades, but also for a wide array of professional/technical occupations where applied problem-solving skills are highly desired.
- Creating more strategic connections between WorkSource and K-12 educational partners to:
  - Share information about local career opportunities with students and career counselors, stressing all types of careers not just college bound occupations.
  - Help youth understand the importance of job readiness skills working earlier with youth on job preparation skills such as basic communication skills, interview conduct, and basic workplace expectations.
- Providing more opportunities for early work experience to all youth, not just those who are high risk or high performing.

## Unique Rural Needs

Some challenges and desired services differed by region, with the most contrast occurring between urban and rural areas. Rural areas appeared to have some additional challenges, mostly due to geographically disbursed offices and customers that require more flexibility in how some services are delivered.

### Establishing mobile service delivery

- With fewer concentrations of both employers and job seekers, rural regions identified a need for more ‘mobile’ services for staff to travel to different parts of the region, rather than having customers travel to WorkSource offices. This was especially true for staff with industry specialization or less frequently needed services such as HR and succession planning for small businesses. Two ideas were mentioned: 1) having a mobile office (e.g. the book mobile) that could travel directly to employers or places where job seekers gathered, and 2) having a place inside a local Chamber of Commerce, SBDC, or local government office where a staff person could conduct business.

### Addressing unique challenges of seasonal workers

- With a higher reliance on tourism, agriculture and natural resource industries, rural regions noted more challenges with seasonal and part-time workers. Helping them find multiple jobs and work within unemployment insurance requirements is a constant dilemma. To help address this issue several ideas were suggested:
  - Have OED - at the state level - conduct an analysis of seasonal jobs for each region and note those with complementary skills and where the seasonality (the timing of work) dovetails with one another.
  - Use the above information to develop basic skills training programs that can build skill sets crossing industries or jobs. Work with employers on better job referrals for seasonal workers.
  - Examine UI restrictions to identify the means by which seasonal workers might be able to work a limited number of days without losing all or part of their unemployment insurance.

When asking WorkSource providers and partners about priorities—what they needed to “get right”—recommendations were broader than just more funding. In reviewing key issues, most did not require new or additional funds, rather a shift in how resources are being used. These high priority recommendations can be categorized in four segments:

- **Operational changes:** Issues that were not based on resource allocation such as having common metrics, developing joint strategic plans between agencies, more interaction among staff to share best practices, etc.
- **Policy refinements:** The ability to leverage resources and improve the impact of workforce services by examining and adjusting policies such as apprenticeship requirements, how UI impacts seasonal

industries and jobs, the use of technology and social media to reach and communicate with customers.

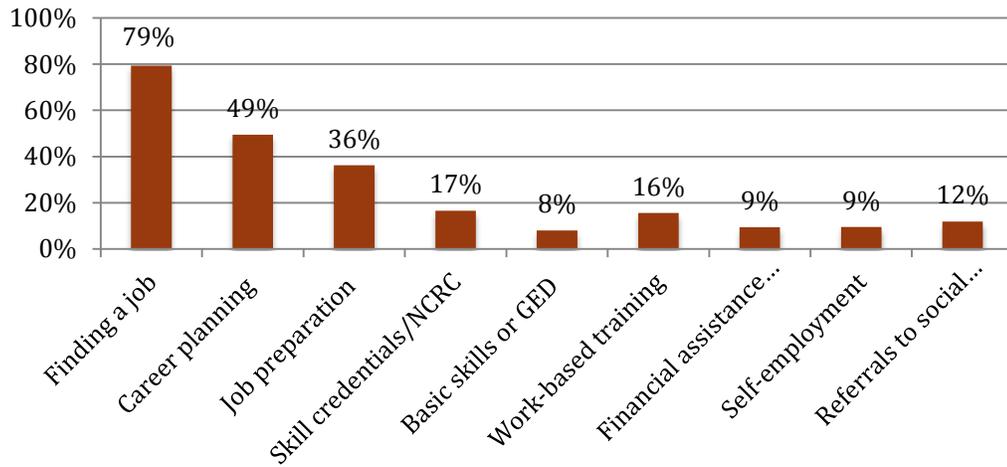
- **Resource reallocation:** Changes that would shift resources from services that had low value or impact to services with higher customer value. Examples include less resources allocated to job postings and more on work-based training and customized recruitment, more industry specific skills training through small groups (cohorts) rather than individual training not linked to local jobs, or moving to a multi-tiered triage/welcome process by simplifying I-Match Skills.
- **Resource enhancement:** Services or foundational issues that will require new or additional investment. A primary example includes the reinvestment in career-technical (vocational) education across the state.

## Job Seeker Survey Summary

The job seeker survey asked questions related to the initial perception of WorkSource, the services used, the satisfaction with services, the reason for not using certain services, and what respondents would like to see in future services. Unless noted, responses were similar across regions, and issues with services were generally related to program restrictions rather than the knowledge or helpfulness of staff.

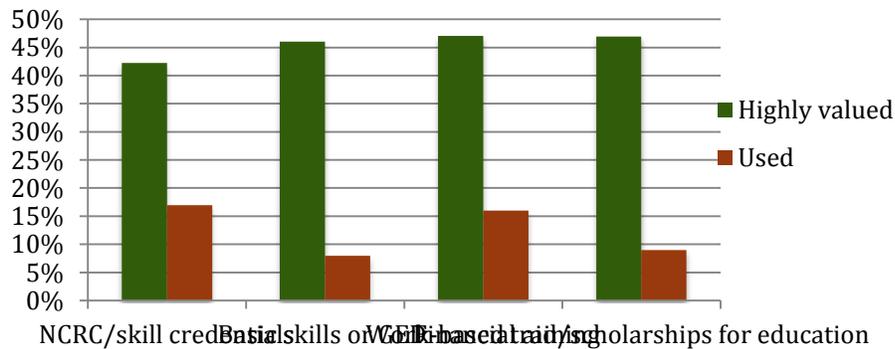
- More than 80% of job seekers knew little about WorkSource prior to their use or viewed it narrowly as a place for unemployed workers. This underscores perceptions of WorkSource still having the stigma as the “unemployment department.”
- Almost 90% of respondents first came to WorkSource due to their unemployment claim; few came because they were seeking services outside of unemployment. This reinforces the claims that the public does not know WorkSource offers training, skill development, youth and other workforce services.
- Once in the door, respondents used WorkSource primarily for three related job placement services— 79% used job referral services, 49.5% took advantage of career planning and assessment services and 36% used job preparation services.
  - More than 80% thought these services met or exceeded expectations.
  - More than 60% of those dissatisfied had some postsecondary education and commented that services were too basic or jobs did not match their skill/experience level.
  - Those that did not use the services felt they did not need them.
- Training and skill development services were far less utilized – ranging from 8-17%, often lower in rural regions, especially in Eastern Oregon. These included basic skills training, work-based training, GED courses, financial aid for school based training, and National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) or other credentials.
  - Approximately 70% of those using the services thought they met or exceeded expectations (lower than the job placement services).
  - Those dissatisfied with the services noted schedules were inconvenient or not offered often enough, or that the program restrictions or content made them less than optimal.
  - While many not using these services felt they did not need them, a significant portion of respondents noted they did not know about them or wanted to use them yet were told they did not qualify.

### Use of WorkSource Services Statewide



- The current use of training and skill development services is low (approximately 12% of respondents noted using these services). This is due primarily to the amount of resources currently allocated to them. To understand the potential need and value for these services, job seekers were asked to what extent would they value or use these services in the future if they were more readily available. In general, over 45% of respondents viewed them as a very valuable part of WorkSource services (the green/left handed columns in the chart below), and another 38% said they had some to moderate value (not represented in the graph). Comparing the current use of training and skill development services to the percent of job seekers that placed the highest value on them, we can approximate a value gap for these programs. These gaps were most acute in rural areas of the state. The gap clearly indicates that current training services are not adequate to meet the potential demand. Write-in comments indicate that the content and delivery of these services also need to be updated.

### The value respondents place on having skill development and training programs



- iMatchSkills (the job matching tool) was not well utilized; almost 60% of those starting iMatchSkills did not complete it. An overwhelming number of write-in comments used terms like complicated, hard to use, useless, cumbersome, or ineffective to describe iMatchSkills.
- Customer satisfaction with staff was very high. Statewide, over 90% of respondents had a favorable experience with WorkSource. When asked what their best part about the WorkSource experience was, respondents choose friendly and knowledgeable staff and a welcoming office three times more

often than other choices. Write-in comments underscored this with positive statements about how hard staff tried to assist even if program eligibility may have prevented the respondent from using a service.

Six implications from the job seeker survey data stood out that had high correlation to input from employers and providers. These were:

- People’s misperceptions about WorkSource prevent those not seeking unemployment insurance from using the system, narrowing the pool of more qualified applicants significantly.
- Employers report using WorkSource for posting mostly entry-level or lower wage jobs (due to their perception of who uses the system), while 39% of WorkSource users have an associates degree or higher. This has resulted in a lack of services, operating processes or job posting for those with higher education levels who are unemployed or looking for a new job.
- Current job matching tools (iMatchSkills) is ineffective; with job seekers noting that the one size fits all triage process is not working. They do, however, view the staff assistance and coaching as very useful.
- Training programs, especially work-based programs, are highly valued by job seekers and they wish to see more resources allocated to training and increased flexibility in being able to utilize these programs.
- There is a disconnect between the low use of basic skills training and the high percent of job seekers with low educational attainment levels. This could imply that the capacity of basic skills programs may be inadequate; the content may not be well connected to jobs, or the marketing to job seekers is not effective.
- Regions with lower levels of partner integration and co-location had the lowest customer satisfaction rating, emphasizing the importance of intentional collaboration in providing a seamless delivery system.

# NORTH COAST FORUM

## Seaside

March 18, 2014

*On March 18, 2014, approximately 38 employers, business groups and service providers gathered in Seaside to discuss workforce issues in the North Coast region. Employers discussed trends and what they need from workforce services to find qualified workers and remain competitive; service providers and workforce partners discussed how the system could better respond to employer and job seeker needs. This is a summary of their strategy session.*

### Part I: Employer Session

#### Employer Workforce Trends in North Coast Region:

*We asked employers about the trends that are affecting how they find, train and retain employees. What challenges have they faced in this part of Oregon and how have these challenges affected their business.*

##### Trends in finding qualified workers

- **Small businesses seek workers who have flexibility and multiple skills;** this requires good basic skills, **customer service orientation** and a **problem-solving attitude**. Businesses can train for specifics.
- **There is an increased use of staffing agencies** and temporary employment for managing variations in workloads throughout the year. This gives employers flexibility and the opportunity to assess workers prior to making a permanent job offer.
- **Hard to find specialized skills and management positions** in the region, likely true throughout rural areas. Often have to **go outside the region** to find applicants, who typically have a **trailing spouse or partner** who also needs employment.
- **Younger workers have less work experience** than they did in previous decades. Employers find it hard to offer them entry-level jobs without knowing they have a work ethic or proven experience at summer jobs, internships, etc.
- **More applications from senior workers** who most often prefer part-time work. Skilled, senior workers compete for the same part-time jobs as younger workers, making it more difficult for youth to gain needed experience.
- **Older workers often have a difficulty marketing themselves** in today's workplace. Social media and other technology-based hiring processes are different than the past. Job preparation work needs to be adjusted to coach them on this.
- There is an **increased use of screening applicants through software** programs. However, some employers find that on-line applicant tracking and screening systems miss the nuances for good matches, and will rely more on their own judgment.
- In this region workers are **willing to commute further for jobs**.

##### Trends in training and retaining workers

- **Most training**, especially with smaller businesses, **is on-the-job training**. This trend is likely to continue for both new and incumbent workers. Training, however, comes after the worker has been determined to be a good "fit" with the company. That is why temp to hire is used in many places where there is significant OJT.
- **Employers lack the time and/or expertise for succession planning**. It is generally a reactive process for most businesses, especially small ones. **Growing the ranks from within is the preferred way to**

- address retirement issues.
- **Employers are challenged by the work style differences among their workers from different generations.** Understanding and managing today’s intergenerational workplaces is important in maintaining worker productivity and employee retention.
- Employers find it difficult to hire qualified applicants who are receiving unemployment insurance (UI) benefits. **When job seekers make more on unemployment, there is little motivation to accept a job earning lower wages.**
- There is a **lack of upward career advancement** opportunities for many workers since rural areas do not have many large employers. There are simply not enough higher level jobs in the region, and workers compromise career advancement and higher pay for the preference to live in the area.

#### Perceptions about WorkSource

- **Businesses are not very familiar with WorkSource.** They mentioned that there are too many names and acronyms, and the system needs a more consistent brand and an easier way to navigate. Some employers believed that services were delivered in a way that was reactive versus proactive.
- **Services do not seem to be well connected to business organizations** like small business development centers, chambers, etc. There is a need to connect with the broader community of partnerships to reach more employers and workers.
- The **North Coast WorkSource system does a good job** at
  - Developing **customized training** programs for groups of employers or industry clusters.
  - Trying to **work with employers** to understand employment needs.

### What Employers Value:

*Employers were asked to describe valuable workforce services, regardless of who provided them. Where did services have the greatest impact on their ability to find or retain employees, or their ability to ensure that workers were productive contributors to the business?*

#### Training Services

- Employers would like to have access to **more resources for incumbent worker training** and to **utilize OJT programs more broadly.** Employers would like to apply OJT to workers in temp-to-hire positions.
- **Employers see value in training related to managing effective intergenerational work environments.** Given the different work styles and values of workers born in various generations, it would help to know how to make their workplace attractive to prospective employees and pleasant and productive for everyone.

#### Workforce Preparation: career planning, job readiness skills and basic skills

- **Employers want to see continued and enhanced skills training and job preparation services** for job seekers. They recognize the difference when applicants have received WorkSource job readiness training that goes beyond resume preparation to how to present and market oneself. Employers value prepared and screened applicants.
  - **Employers would like to include customer service as part of basic skills training.** Many jobs in coastal areas are tourism-based or have a strong customer service component. Routine screening and training for these skills would broaden the pool of qualified applicants.
  - Employers desire more applicants to have **basic computer skills** since most jobs involve some use of technology. They would value WorkSource preparing job seekers in computer usage and training them to a basic level of proficiency.
- **Employers appreciate WorkSource services that help people find and adjust to a second career** and learn how to use their skills and experience to “reinvent” themselves. Employers mentioned that the recession caused many people to do this and the employers have reaped the benefits of experienced applicants who are motivated to apply their skills in a new way.

### Assistance with talent acquisition

- **Employers value job fulfillment services** when the staffing person works closely with a local business, has been on site, knows the work environment and the employer's workforce needs. Posting jobs online has little value to employers who already do that in a variety of places. The added value is in the staff's ability to make a qualified referral because they have the insight about what an employer really needs.
- **Small businesses desire training to develop and manage their talent.** Employers without HR functions want help in writing job descriptions, in effective interviewing techniques as well as how to plan for turnover and retirements, etc.

## Where would North Coast employers like to see resources allocated?

*Overall, employers value personalized services (for businesses and job seekers) and work-based training. They are less likely to value generic job postings, NCRC, and software driven assessment tools. They also want to see more consistent branding of WorkSource and better integration of services among partners.*

Additional **work-based training** was among the most requested service expansion. Particularly, employers wanted **more resources for OJT** and more flexible guidelines that would allow them to use services for **underemployed workers, or incumbent workers** needing to enhance skills in order to replace a more senior worker who retired or left the company.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Allocate additional resources toward work-based training programs and have allowances for incumbent worker training.

Employers valued **customized recruitment** and wanted to ensure resources for that function were in place and expanded to meet the demand of employers in the region. They suggested reallocating money from traditional job posting functions.

Since the North Coast region had a strong tourism function, they would like to see **customer service and basic front office/business skills included in basic skill training** so there would be a more qualified pool of applicants for employers and greater likelihood of job seekers finding employment. As one employer said, **"Train for talent, not just for skills."**

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Update and modify basic skills classes and workshops to include skill sets common among regional employers and industry sectors.

Employers strongly supported the need for more **vocational education and apprenticeships**. Employers felt that they were having to do more basic and foundational skill training around entry level skills such as basic machine operations, reading a tape measure, etc. This required more time and training per employee at the employer's expense to make them a productive part of their workforce. They would like to see **K-12 system reinvest in career technical (vocational) education**.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Has the local workforce board play an active role in bringing together employers and educational professionals around this issue.
- The State OWIB and WorkSource agencies advocate more strongly for vocational education investment.

Employers would like WorkSource partners to do a better job at having **easy access to information** about all services and more **consistent branding**. Along with collective information, it is important for employers to have **one contact** (a concierge) to guide them through relevant programs for which they may be eligible. Small businesses would particularly want more support in this way. Employers in this region would like access to the full range of WorkSource services, although they recognize that they don't have the population to warrant fully staffed offices throughout the region.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Develop more complete and integrated information about services.
- Have **specialized staff that travels from office to office** or to partner locations in order to increase access to services.

Better **integration with small business development centers** to help companies, especially those just starting to develop strong HR practices, learn how to write a job description, or understand how to manage intergenerational workplace settings.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Establish regional expertise that would work collaboratively with business organizations or with employers using other WorkSource services to develop one-on-one and small group assistance to employers on HR and succession planning.

## Part II: Provider-Partner Strategy Session

Immediately following employer input, WorkSource providers and partners conducted a strategy session to explore the following questions:

- Based on employer and job seeker input and your experience, what does an effective WorkSource system look like? What are the desired outcomes?
- Based on this vision, what's working?
- Where are opportunities to do things differently or to be more innovative?
- Of all the issues discussed in the above questions, what must we "get right" (what must be in place, what must we do first, etc.) in order to reach our vision.

### What is the vision of an effective WorkSource system?

#### Overall

- **Employers and job seekers use the system** because it is **customer focused** and can easily **respond to different needs**:
  - "People over paper:" customers feel like their individual needs are understood and met.
  - Job seekers **build confidence as well as competencies**.
- People find quality jobs and employers find quality workers because the **system understands fit and speed**, resulting in WorkSource as a place that employers and job seekers want to use.
- **Employers and job seekers know about WorkSource**. Services are well understood and all customers can easily find resources and offices because there is **consistent branding**.

#### Services to employers and industry groups

- **Small business owners are aware of and utilize WorkSource services** available to them and the robust network of partners specializing in support of small businesses. This will help them to be successful and thrive as employers in the region.

#### Services to job seekers and youth

- There is **training at all stages of a career** and the training is targeted and effective, leading to employment for job seekers and advancement for incumbent workers who are interested in higher level positions and/or different work.
- Staff provides **coaching services when needed**, not just when specified by procedure.
- All WorkSource **tools are user friendly** and available to everyone. This includes the welcome system and initial assessment, self-service modules, and other on-line support processes.
- There is an **effective and efficient process to assess job seekers** that is consistent throughout the system and leads to relevant support services and appropriate and timely referrals.

#### Partnerships and systems integration

- WorkSource professionals are knowledgeable about all programs and are well-trained in learning about the services provided by all key partners. This will allow for effective referrals and the elimination of duplicative services; it will foster teamwork and pave the way for consistent branding and co-marketing of services to customers throughout the region.
- Staff has the ability to **share ideas and pool resources** so we don't "reinvent the wheel" office by office.
- **WorkSource programs and community colleges work together** to identify, create, and facilitate education-based and work-based training that ties-in with the current and anticipated workforce needs of regional employers and job markets.

## What's working?

### Overall

- **WorkSource staff and partners who love their work and value the customer.**
- Growing awareness about the **need for increased and relevant vocational training at the middle and high school levels**. Although funding has not been available, we are certain of the need and ready to find the resources.

### Services to employers and industry groups

- WorkSource staff has the ability to provide **higher level screening and recruitment service for employers that want it**. (This is similar in function to what has been piloted in other regions as “customized recruitment.”) This is performed on a case-by-case basis and although the capacity to do so is limited, the service is successful. Employers are pleased to receive qualified and well-screened applicants who “fit” their environments.
- **WorkSource professionals are effective in supporting employer job fairs**. These continue to be successful in reaching out to job seekers who can meet and connect with local employers. In rural areas these opportunities to network and form relationships is very important.
- WorkSource has received positive reports from job seekers and workers who have participated in the **Back to Oregon and OJT programs**.

### Services to job seekers and youth

- **The North Coast region consistently provides a warm and welcoming environment** for customers, and staff demonstrates a genuine desire for job seekers to be successful.
- **There are an array of tools offered to job seekers** including initial assessment of needs, help with writing resumes, developing interview skills, providing labor information about jobs and careers, etc. WorkSource provides help to job seekers in **becoming job ready and developing career plans; there are successful Job Corp centers**.
- Much help and guidance is provided to job seekers to **gain their GED, enhance their basic skills and obtain their NCRC**.

### Partnerships and systems integration

- There is effective collaboration between WorkSource and the community college in supporting **skill training that is relevant to the region's industry sectors**.

## Where can we do things differently or innovate?

### Overall

- **Develop and implement a cohesive brand for WorkSource**, collectively market and consistently communicate the array of services to businesses and job seekers.
- **Increase the pool of qualified applicant talent**. This can be achieved by working closely with community colleges, and other partners in the system to ensure everyone is sharing and contributing their applicants, trainees, employed job seekers, etc. into the system. This will lead to diverse and robust applicant pools, more choice for employers and greater hiring success.

### Enhanced services for employers and industry groups

- **Create more options and greater flexibility in the delivery of short-term, work based, and just-in-time training**.
- **Work with groups of employers** to be more **proactive in understanding employment needs, skill requirements and “fit” preferences** in order to identify qualified applicants and make well-screened referrals. WorkSource to work across offices collaboratively to find good candidates.
- Connect WorkSource and community college training resources to **develop incumbent worker**

- training for skills that cross multiple employers.** For example there is a significant need for supervisory training that can be conducted for groups of employers.
- Enhance assistance to small businesses. Identify workforce needs and assist them with effective recruitment and selection processes. This can be achieved through collaboration between WorkSource and small business development centers.
  - **Design and deliver training and coaching to assist employers to create productive intergenerational workplace settings.** Employers and workers from different generations need to better understand each other and training in this area is needed.

Enhanced services for job seekers and youth

- **Create and implement youth programs that go beyond youth at risk** and are applied more broadly through partners.
- **Have better and quicker assessment tools** so more staff time can be spent on coaching and not administering online tools. Provide more flexible services to workers; having the ability to quickly assess needs and get people to the services they want and need; a one size fits all assessment doesn't work
- **Use technology that is familiar and appropriate for customers** and having the ability to communicate through available technologies such as text, email, twitter, Facebook, Skype, etc. This would be effective and timely, particularly if it enables staff to route notifications in more than one way.

Enhanced partnerships and systems integration

- Develop a **network of multiple service sites** where customers in remote areas will have access to needed services and specialists at scheduled intervals. All job seekers and employers in the rural areas need access to the full range of WorkSource services.
- **Design and implement regularly scheduled in-service days for staff** to learn about each other's programs, share ideas, fine-tune existing services, launch pilots, measure, analyze and report on outcomes.

## What must we get right?

*At the end of the day, we asked providers where to start. What aspects of the WorkSource system do we have to get right if the North Coast region was to achieve their vision?*

**Aligning resources with the needs of our local employers and industries.** This means helping them find, train and retain the workforce essential to their survival. It is not an overstatement that small business in coastal and rural areas need help to start and stay in business. Support needs to come in the form of customized recruiting and work-based training.

**Enhancing and maintaining a WorkSource system that is customer- rather than process-driven.** Services must be more individualized for employers and job seekers and performance metrics need to be established that measure customer outcomes, not how many people we serve. Results need to be about "people, not paper."

**Implementing a welcome process that can respond to the various needs and wants of customers,** and is not based on a one size fits all. The welcome and initial assessment needs to be warm and efficient allowing for more coaching and individualized support.

**Coordinating services more effectively** where partners know each other's services and where expertise can be shared. Some staff with specialized programs and areas of expertise may travel to smaller offices at regularly scheduled intervals to ensure that the full range of services is available to all customers.

**Training, staff development and in-service days should occur regularly for WorkSource partners.** This will serve to cultivate the desired culture of collaboration among partners, facilitate awareness about the

full range of WorkSource services, build relationships among staff and offices, and ensure a way of sharing ideas, tools, pilots and results.

**Branding WorkSource in a cohesive and consistent way throughout the state.** This means all partners use the WorkSource brand and co-market services in a coordinated fashion.