

# 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**

## South-Central Coast Region

Contains summaries of the following

- Statewide Assessment
- Florence 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

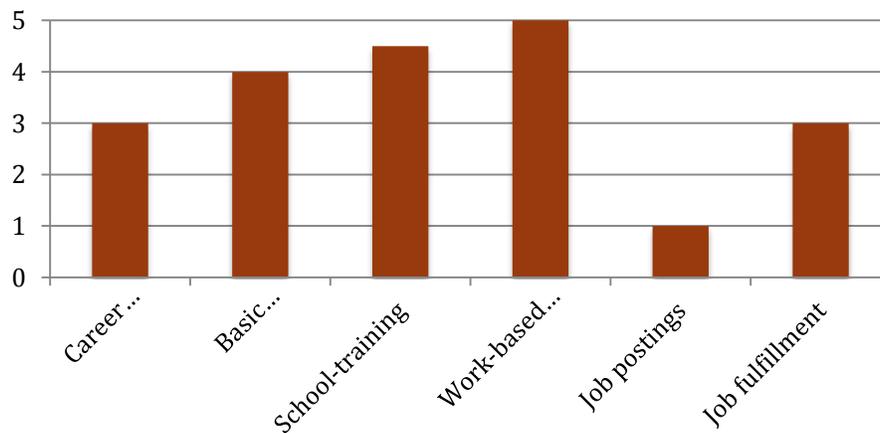
Employers view the WorkSource system as a set of inter-related services, where more efficiencies and impact could be gained through enhanced coordination and improved marketing of available services. To achieve this vision, businesses want WorkSource to have **a broader pool of applicants with a wider 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 less 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.

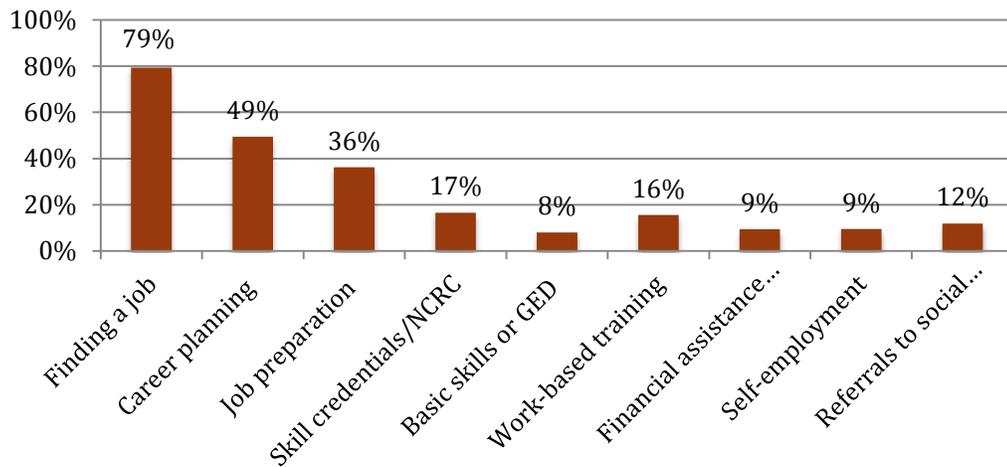
- **Resource reallocation:** Changes that would shift resources from services that had low value or impact to services with higher customer value. Examples include less resources allocated to job postings and more on work-based training and customized recruitment, more industry specific skills training 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.

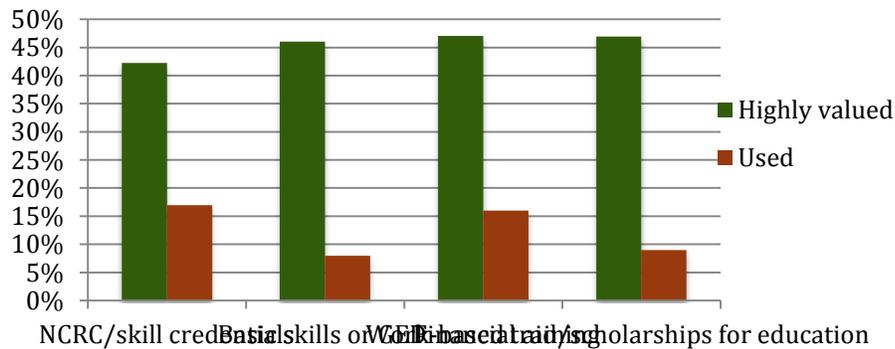
- More than 80% of job seekers knew little about WorkSource prior to their use or viewed it narrowly as a place for unemployed workers. This underscores perceptions of WorkSource still having the stigma as the “unemployment department.”
- Almost 90% of respondents first came to WorkSource due to their 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 are 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.

# CENTRAL and SOUTH COAST FORUM

## Florence

March 19, 2014

*On March 19, 2014, approximately 34 employers, business groups and service providers gathered in Florence to discuss workforce issues in the Central and South 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 the Central and South 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

- **It is difficult to find top-level positions** and most companies have needed to recruit from out of the region. When this happens, it is difficult to find opportunities for the trailing spouse or partner.
- **Retirees are returning to work but most do not have technology skills** while younger people have less work experience and many are not skilled at interviewing or knowing how to conduct themselves professionally.
- **The National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) not really understood or used by many employers.** Rather see resources put toward job fulfillment services where staff has time to develop relationships with employers, do on-site visits, and become familiar with the business.
- **Small businesses lack expertise in recruitment and selection processes.** They can use help in learning how to write an accurate job description, hire, on-board and retain employees. Resources may be available in larger cities, but are not well distributed. Rural areas could benefit from sharing this type of training with other regions that provide it.
- **There can be limited availability of staffing services (temp to hire)** in this region; some employers have created longer probation periods to test potential employees for fit.
- **Many applicants have temporary work experience and employers who don't use temp services are hesitant to consider workers with this type of work history.** Employers may benefit from training about how to assess work history in today's environment.
- **Appearance still matters** in customer service oriented jobs. Some applicants have relevant skills but are judged as not presentable according to company dress codes regarding body art, clothing choices, etc. Employers suggest that it would be helpful to stress this in high schools so youth understand the career impact of personal decisions.
- **There is less applicant interest in manufacturing and trade jobs.** Outside of tourism and hospitality, trades are a large source of employment, and employers express the need for more vocational education in K-12 and post-secondary schools.

##### Trends in training and retaining workers

- Because most businesses are small, the **growth paths for entry-level people are limited.** Even when there is a promotion opportunity, many do not have supervisory skills or want to be a manager.
- **The large numbers of seasonal jobs make it hard for residents to have consistent income.** Larger

- companies and organizations can move people around to accommodate uneven labor needs, but the smaller businesses can't. Many workers are left to piece together different jobs throughout the year.
- **Employers expect entry level workers to have basic and soft skills as well as some level of skill or understanding of the industry in which they are working.** For example, employers expect qualified applicants to have customer service skills in hospitality or mechanical aptitude for manufacturing and construction jobs.
  - Since turnover is expensive and an employee's fit (skills + attitude) is essential, most **employers prefer to train and grow their workers from within.**
  - **Rural areas are finding ways to be creative in order to leverage resources;** for example the Tribes **loan out HR specialists** to do training for other organizations (hospital, etc.).
  - While businesses need to adjust to different generational expectations, **personal grooming, communication skills, work ethic and professional conduct are important for hiring and retaining employees.**
  - The **geographic distance between WorkSource offices make services difficult to use.** It would be helpful to have rotating positions where specialists can provide needed services to rural locations one or two days a week. Because some services are not readily available in all places, groups like the Rotary are helping people with job preparation including resume writing, interviews, etc.

## What Employers Value:

*Employers were asked to describe valuable workforce services, regardless of who provides 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

- **Employer expressed high value in on the job or work-based training.** Rural areas often have people with good work ethic but not all the needed skills; having a way to bring them up to speed quickly is critical.
- **Employers are requesting more assistance with incumbent worker training.** Most companies prefer to promote workers from within making incumbent worker training very important. This is especially critical in rural areas where the labor pool is more limited. Supervisory training is probably the biggest shared need among businesses.

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

- **Employers would value more customer service and computer skills training as part of basic skills.** Rural areas tend to have training needs defined by skill sets rather than sectors as there are not many sizable industry clusters in the coastal regions. Customer service and computer skills are considered basic skills that applicants need to have to be job ready. Employers encouraged WorkSource to provide customer service and computer training to enhance the skill set of the applicant pool. They specifically suggested that community colleges deliver a program of hospitality basics that could also count toward college credit/certificate if workers want to pursue training further.
- **Employers want to see more information for youth and job seekers about local industries and career opportunities.** While customized recruitment is helping to make WorkSource staff more aware of the types of jobs likely to grow in the region, employers do not feel there is a coordinated attempt for WorkSource, K-12 and community colleges to understand the work environments and the skill needs of local employers or industry sectors. They would value more career planning around regional strategies.
- **Employers highly value local vocational education.** Better outreach is needed to create seamless ways for youth to enter vocational trades as a career path. They would like to see WorkSource be an advocate for vocational programs at the K-12 and community college level and facilitate job shadowing or other early exposure for youth to connect to trades. Some work is may be necessary to alleviate labor restrictions under the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) regulations.

Assistance with Talent Acquisition

- Employers experience good results and value WorkSource’s **active job fulfillment** services (customized recruitment). Job referrals are most important when WorkSource providers are deeply familiar with the businesses in their regions—ongoing working relationships and site visits to understand the right “fit”. In addition, employers appreciate help in writing job descriptions and with marketing themselves to applicants.
- Small businesses want help with **succession planning**: Perhaps have one person on staff that can help businesses with HR and succession planning.
- Employer find detailed and current **wage information** by region and industry helpful in understanding how to set salaries and benefits.

Collaboration with WorkSource Partners

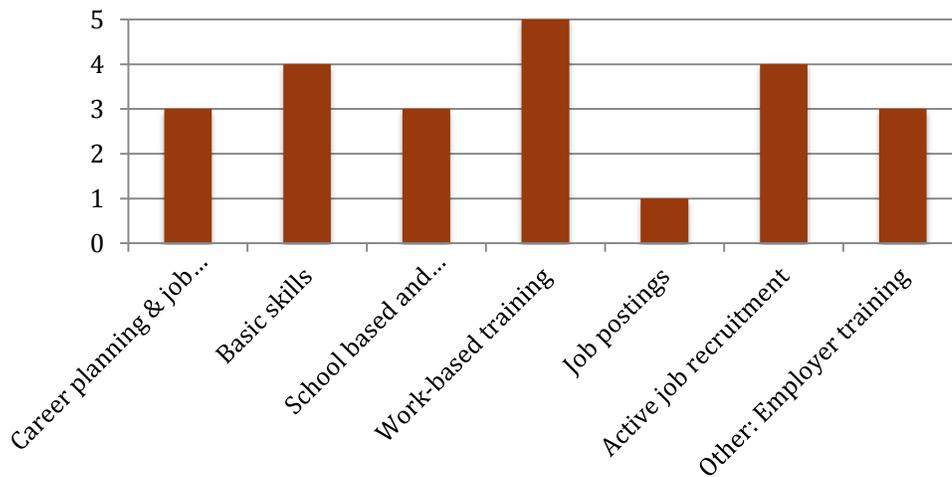
- Employers would like a **consistent WorkSource brand** or “no wrong door” approach to how the region’s workforce services are provided. They would value not just more integration of services but **shared expertise that could travel around the region** to reach more employers.
- Employers see value in **connecting small business development centers and WorkSource** centers so business can understand workforce services available to them and help get off to a good start with employment issues.

**Desired Allocation of Resources**

*We asked employers to allocate where they would like to see WorkSource resources allocated by key functions of: a) career planning and job preparation, b) basic skills training and credentials, c) work-based training for new or incumbent workers, d) school-based training, e) job postings, and f) active job fulfillment (recruitment and screening). They were also allowed to list any other services that were not part of the current service offering.*

*Each employer was given \$100 (of play money) in \$5 increments and asked to spend the money 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.*

**Desired allocation of WorkSource resources by central and south coast employers**



*During the report back from employers, we asked why they allocated their money to certain functions or types of services. The following summarized in order of importance what they hoped to see in the future.*

The coast clearly wanted to see more **work-based training for both new and incumbent workers**. For new workers it was the way to ramp up their productivity and for incumbent workers it was a key way to move people up to replace retiring workers.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Allocate additional resource to work-based training and allow training funds to be used in a more flexible manner.

Employers wanted an increase in **basic skills training** to incorporate the ability to **train pools of workers** in areas such as **customer service and basic business skills**.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Evaluate their industry sector strategies for “base” skills that are shared among groups of employers and then provide skills training for cohorts of job seekers to increase their qualifications for local employment.

Businesses in the region wanted additional resources spent on **customized recruitment and job fulfillment** so WorkSource staff has the ability to be more engaged in understanding employer’s hiring needs, spend more time on-site and be able to work with employers in a more proactive fashion.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Expand their pilot recruitment program to all parts of the region.

They suggested more resources in school-based training going to help clusters of employers train for management skills and **more vocational programs in K-12 and community colleges**.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Work collaboratively with K-12 and community colleges to expand vocational training and education
- Work with Oregon’s Bureau of Labor and Industry (BOLI) to ease restrictions on students’ ability to work in industrial environments as part of vocational education programs.

Employers saw the need to **connect workforce services to other business development programs** that helped owners operate more effectively. They defined “employer training” as **helping with HR planning and intergenerational workplace issues**, as well as having strong SBDC services in the region.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Develop or enhance the expertise to assist small businesses with HR and succession planning.
- Offer, perhaps in collaboration with small business development center, intergenerational workplace workshop for employers and job seekers. The program offered in the North Coast region could be expanded to this region.

In terms of career planning and job preparation, it was important that not only WorkSource staff, but **educational partners in K-12 and community colleges understood the careers in the region** so youth had a better understanding of what their employment opportunities in the area.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Develop easily understood sector based skills and career information connected to the local economy. Work with K-12 and community colleges to share this information and ensure career pathways have a more seamless transition between partners.

The **least valuable service was posting jobs**. Employers used an array of sources and did not find this service to be of significant value

Overall Florence businesses and economic partners attending the session had a favorable impression of WorkSource. They believe the staff is professional and passionate about their work, and frustrations with the system were mostly around restrictions of programs that made it difficult to use or limited the impact.

## 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

- **WorkSource system reflects the needs of the region** and employers find workers locally
- **WorkSource acts as a problem solver for employers and job seekers** to address the needs of each.
- There is clear **accountability to our customers and each other**

#### Services to employers and industry groups

- Businesses large and small actively use WorkSource services
  - Employers and workers have **greater awareness** of programs
  - The services are **easy to understand and navigate**
- There are **strong industry and employer relationships** enabling WorkSource to anticipate upcoming needs as industries change.
- There are **greater work-based and just-in-time training options**, including OJT, incumbent worker training, and sector/occupational cluster-based training that moves with the regional economy.

#### Services to job seekers and youth

- Program **outcomes are clearly defined** and there is **more flexibility in how programs are administered** region to region so they have greater impact and are more responsive.
- The **system does not penalize people for taking temporary jobs** and allows them to access training while in this transition.
- There are **consistent operating policies and eligibility requirements** so there is less red tape and "hoops" clients have to negotiate in the job search process.
- The **welcome process and initial assessment are more flexible** and based on individual needs; those requiring more coaching can receive it, and those needing limited services can quickly access those programs.

#### Partnerships and system integration

- All **partners understand the programs provided by each other** and they actively co-market the array of programs, not just theirs.
- Partners have a **feedback system by which they share information at strategic points**. An example of this may involve community college liaisons working with businesses to develop customized training programs and then also sharing information about the training with WorkSource specialists who in turn can recommend applicants for the training and act on potential employment opportunities.
- Because there is a way to share information, **partners can pool resources and remove duplication** which results in **"intentional integration."**

## What's working?

### Overall

- **Staff are passionate about their work;** people enjoy their jobs and helping customers
- **Regional partners work together on a regular basis** and find creative ways to solve problems

### Services to employers and industry groups

- **There are positive working relationships with many businesses** and on-site visits are occurring when time permits. Customized recruitment services have very good results for employers.
- **On-the-job training and work-place training is effective.** However, the restrictions involving worker eligibility for the training makes it difficult to deploy the services to many of the employers who want it.
- **Hosting job fairs with employers and business groups is working well.** The fairs help staff understand local employer needs and enables employers to find qualified candidates.
- **OED research about economic and employment trends is available to employers.** WorkSource is able to provide employers and business groups information about regional or state industries, wages and occupations.
- **Partnerships with local Chambers of Commerce** has been helpful in marketing WorkSource services and understanding local business needs.

### Services to job seekers and youth

- Department of Human Services (DHS) coordinates with other WorkSource **services to help workers address barriers to getting employment.**
- **Job preparation services are customized** to help people with resumes, interview skills, etc.
- **High school dual credit programs** are taking place that give students a running start at post-secondary education.
- **A small yet engaged community college that offers customized training as well as degree and credit programs.**
- **Basic skills training classes and courses (including high school equivalent certificates) help those with limited skills or education.** These programs have been successful although class availability is limited or restricted to participants in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. This means other job seekers needing the training may not have access to it.

## Where can we do things differently or innovate?

### Overall

- **Implement a "bridge" program** to supplement workers receiving higher unemployment insurance benefits than wages at a new job so they do not lose money but do gain permanent employment.
- **Co-locate** the full complement of job seeker services to create a one-stop shopping organization. Likewise, have a more cohesive branding strategy and do more joint marketing of services.

### Enhanced services to employers and industry groups

- Provide additional resources for **incumbent worker** training, and coordinate with community college funds and programs.
- Deliver more resources and flexibility or pilots around **on the job training**, especially for employees that enter employment through a temp-to-hire arrangement.
- **Develop pools of applicants that are more "employer ready"** by conducting more group or cohort training that is aligned with regional jobs. For instance, training 8-10 applicants in customer service skills required by regional employers. Letting employers know as training is being conducted that these applicants will be available.
- **Strengthen partnerships** with Small Business Development Centers, Chambers of Commerce and other business groups to **collaborate in delivering business-workforce training.** Some examples of

successful trainings are the Small Business Development Center's course on quick books, and WorkSource support to employers with job descriptions, hiring practices, etc.

#### Enhanced services to job seekers and youth

- **Simplify the welcome process** at WorkSource for job seekers with improved iMatchSkills tools and the ability to provide more **upfront coaching or one-on-one time** to get job seekers started in the right direction.
- **Utilize** social media to communicate with students and community members concerning job openings, job fairs, training opportunities in the community.
- **Create** consistent outreach program about career planning and job/career opportunities to high schools students, teachers and counselors through presentations and social media.
- Have **good data that shows the National Career Readiness Certification (NCRC) makes a difference** in employment so staff can market it, workers will obtain it, and employers will use it.
- **Assessment tools that are easier to use** and which have recognized value by employers and workers; then have **adequate staff training** to support these tools.

#### Enhanced partnerships and systems integration

- **Work more collaboratively** across WorkSource, education and BOLI to offer skills training and early work experience **in trades/manufacturing** for youth.
- Incorporate ways to **address staffing limitation in small offices**; perhaps having "riders" (people that can move from office to office during the week)
- Develop a system by which we can **learn about and make better connections across agencies** and partners (more forums like this)
- **Increase** communication between schools and employers regarding employment trends, community needs and training programs. Needs to be initiated and sustained by WorkSource.

## 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 central and south coast region was to achieve their vision?*

**Intentional integration.** WorkSource in this region needs partners that are co-located, aware of each other's services and contributions, and meet regularly to improve the coordination of services.

**Establishing data systems that support collaboration and customer services.** This means that WorkSource partners have a data system where information from various programs is centralized, shared and provides more complete analysis of customer needs and WorkSource performance.

Having **adequate resources for work-based training** to help workers get jobs and move up in their jobs. This includes the ability to provide incumbent worker training to help companies replace higher skilled workers that have left, as well as helping underemployed workers gain skills for higher-wage jobs and better earning potential.

Creating a **welcome or triage process at the front end that is not a one size fits all**, so people needing limited services can quickly get those, and people needing more coaching or multiple services can have more individualized plans.

Creating real time information about **local employment opportunities and connecting that information with education partners** so youth has a better understanding of careers in the area and what skills and job readiness experience they need to qualify.

**Enhancing accountability** to customers and each other by having **metrics that measure customer results** rather than our individual programs.