

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 Willamette Valley Region

Contains summaries of the following

- Statewide Assessment
- Eugene 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

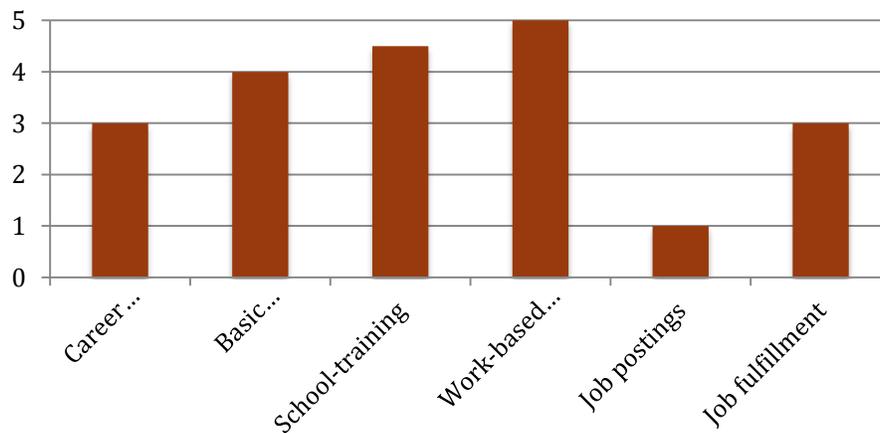
Employers view the WorkSource system as a set of inter-related services, where more efficiencies and impact could be gained through enhanced coordination and improved marketing of available services. To achieve this vision, businesses want WorkSource to have **a broader pool of applicants with a wider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

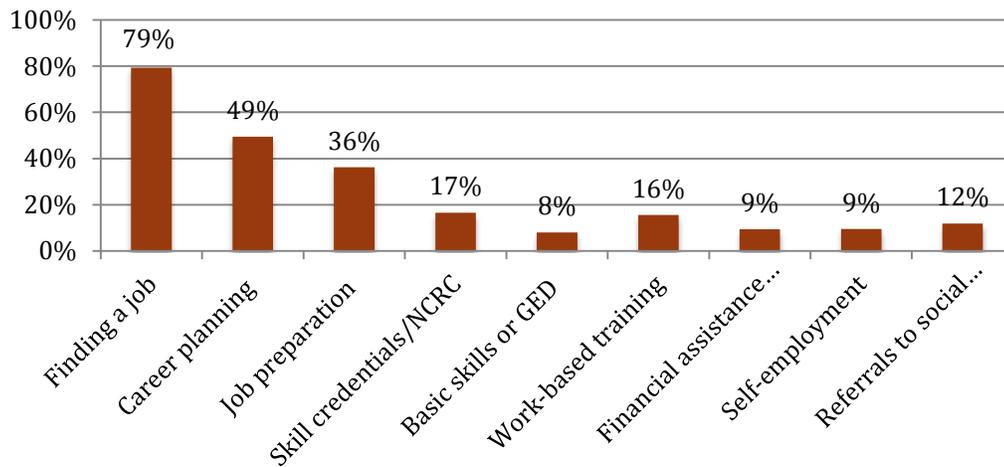
- **Resource reallocation:** Changes that would shift resources from services that had low value or impact to services with higher customer value. Examples include less resources allocated to job postings and more on work-based training and customized recruitment, more industry specific skills training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

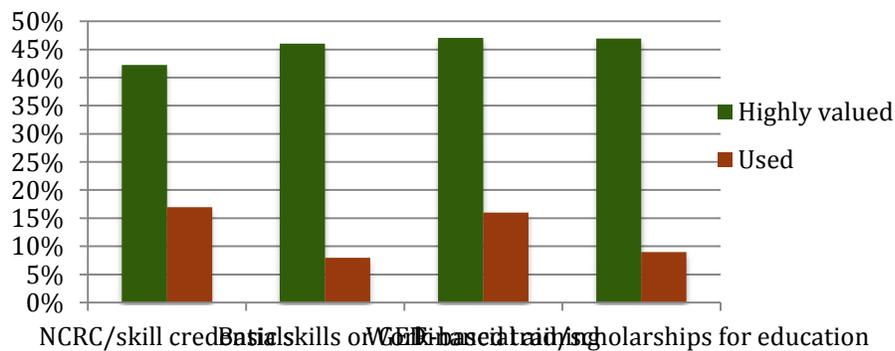
- More than 80% of job seekers knew little about WorkSource prior to their use or viewed it narrowly as a place for unemployed workers. This underscores perceptions of WorkSource still having the stigma as the “unemployment department.”
- Almost 90% of respondents first came to WorkSource due to their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

SOUTHERN WILLAMETTE VALLEY FORUM

Eugene

April 22, 2014

On April 22, 2014, approximately 98 employers, business groups and service providers gathered in Eugene to discuss workforce issues in the South Valley 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 Southern Willamette Valley 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. These are the trends and observations reported by employers and business organizations attending the forum

Trends in finding qualified workers

- **Overall quality of applicants of applicants is lower than in the past.** While applicants may have computer literacy, they have **poor writing and basic skills.**
- **The definition for basic or “base” skills has expanded.** Customer service, computer use, and basic business/applied financial skills are now standard.
- It is difficult to find **applicants for supervisory, middle or higher skilled jobs.** Today’s applicants lack the ability to present themselves professionally, speak in front of groups or meetings and/or manage others.
- **Retirements among trade and skilled workers** are occurring now in large numbers without a pipeline of trained and ready replacements.
- There are **fewer skilled applicants for work in specific trades and manufacturing jobs.**
- In some industries automation, lean work processes, slow markets and budget cuts have reduced worker numbers for certain positions. In contrast, positions for higher skilled jobs are left unfilled because of **the lack of available, experienced workers.**
- Employers are **expanding the geographic recruitment areas beyond the local labor market** to attract potential employees for higher skilled jobs.
- **There are inter-generational differences** in work-ethic, work expectations, and communication styles. Particularly, the trend of young workers leaving jobs after short durations impacts the feasibility of employers making investments in their training.
- **Employers are finding it difficult to find the right “fit” with applicants.** People may have skills and pass screenings, but lack the desire to perform the work well or stay on the job.
- **Local applicants seem less concerned in presenting themselves in a professional manner** at interviews than those from out of state.
- **Employees are using jobs as stepping-stones;** on average new workers stay shorter amounts of time in a position.
- **University graduates from the region have unreasonable expectations about wages** and job responsibilities for entry level jobs. Employers report these students indicate that their career guidance in school sets this expectation.

- **Community college students comprise a desirable applicant pool** because they generally have more work experience and more realistic work expectations.
- **There is a larger push to recruit veterans** due to Federal initiatives.
- Applicants expect more work-life balance concessions from employers in regard to time off and other scheduling modifications.

What Employers Value

Employers were asked to describe what was valuable about 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 see significant pay back in supporting **work-based training** such as on-the-job (OJT) training, apprenticeships and incumbent worker training. **Incumbent worker training** is especially critical for replacing higher skilled workers that retiring at faster rates than during the recession.
- Employers want **more vocational training in high schools**. The current pool of applicants lack many basic skills associated with vocational education. Reinvesting in this training would produce a higher pool of skilled applicants, and expose students to potential careers that pay family wages.

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

- Employers value **training that combines basic skills with applied entry-level skills** including customer service, quality assurance, and an understanding of basic business so employees understand the financial limits of businesses and the need to be prudent in the use of resources.
- Employers understand the **importance of youth work experience** and **early exposure to career information** to help match their skills and interests to possible career paths.
- **Employers would value assistance with matching credentials that are critical to their types of jobs.** NCRC can be valuable for employers. However, the ability to understand how the different NCRC levels apply to a specific industry or business can be confusing.

Assistance with Talent Acquisition

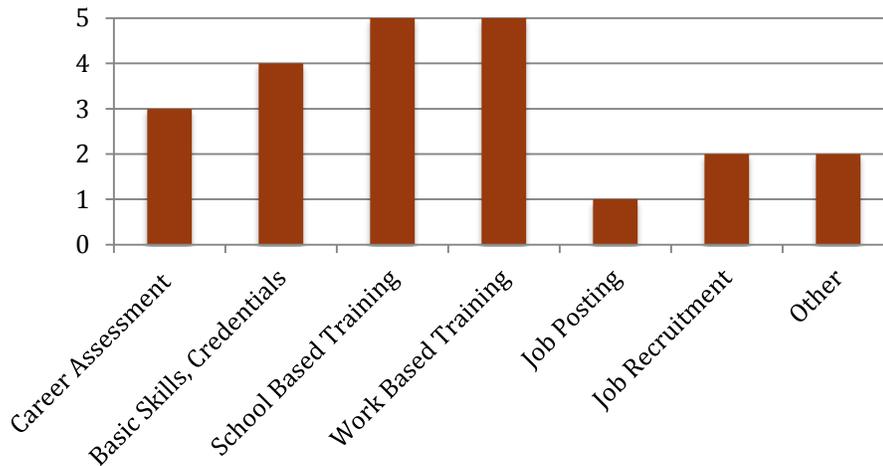
- Businesses value the **customized recruiting** services and the **verification of applicant's skills and credentials**. They would like to see more sector-specific specialists that have a deep understanding of skills and jobs for a certain set of industries.
- Businesses value having a **streamlined hiring process** and a ready pool of qualified applicants. Have processes that make it easy for employers to hire quickly.

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 Southern Willamette Valley 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.

Employers in the Southern Willamette Valley clearly wanted resources allocated to all types of training. Consistent with all regions, **work-based training** was an essential service for employers to get new employees up to speed and to train existing employees for new skills that would help the business stay competitive (and therefore not need to lay off people). More **flexible OJT and incumbent worker training** was a central point of discussion.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Increase resources allocated to work-based training and allow for a portion of funds to be used for incumbent workers
- Help business establish apprenticeship programs

School-based training also ranked high in terms of having needs where additional resources would benefit the workforce. In this category employers wanted to see more **vocational education**, more **work experience and job readiness skills for youth**, especially in high schools; more realistic information in higher education about entry-level jobs, and the ability to **aggregate middle skill training** such as supervisory skills for local businesses.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Be an advocate for increased funding for vocational education and training
- Develop clear and concise information about regional industries and career paths (including accurate starting wage information) and work with K-12 and higher education to get this information to students and career counselors
- Enhance resources for youth work experience
- Establish a seamless relationship between WorkSource staff and community colleges in identify customized training needs

Employers also wanted to see more resources allocated toward **basic skills and credentials**. Primarily businesses wanted to **expand the skills** within this type of training to include customer service, common business skills (use of office software, applied math for sales, inventory, etc.) and quality control. Employers in the Southern Willamette Valley were one of the few regions that valued the **NCRC** and wanted assistance in applying it to their work environment.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Enhance basic skills training to include skills common in most entry-level jobs
- Develop a system by which customized recruitment staff or others working with employers can assist in identifying NCRC needs and where it can be applied to a particular business

The “other” category centered on having a more **coordinated approach to marketing** all of WorkSource and partner service; where employers could easily see the menu of services and where there was a **concierge type service** for employers.

Other issues included:

- More robust career information centered on regional industries and career paths.
- Maintaining and expanding customized recruitment.

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 the 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

- An **inclusive system** that is able to serve individuals with different needs and abilities
- A **system that is friendly, engaging, resource-rich and fully-staffed**: where WorkSource serves as the communication hub between business and employees.
- A **system that is fully co-located physically and/or virtually** with all community resources: where effective and timely customer support is provided through smooth handoffs and targeted referrals among WorkSource staff.
- A **system without silos** that is truly integrated and collaborative in process, organizational structure, culture, goals and measures.
- A **system with effective marketing and outreach** to job seekers, employers and small businesses about all services.
- **Having highly qualified WorkSource staff** throughout the system.
- A **future-focused system** that is able to anticipate workforce needs and trends at the local, regional and statewide levels with the ability to adjust effectively as needed.

Services to employers and industry groups

- A **system where employers trust and support WorkSource because they consistently receive qualified job candidates** in a timely manner.
- **Employers recognize the value of certifications and the value provided by WorkSource** to pre-screen for the competencies they need.
- A system that meets employers' needs with informed and targeted **training for incumbent workers and potential employees**.
- A well-promoted system where **employers are aware of all services and receive continuous communication**.

Services to job seekers and youth

- WorkSource is **responsive to both job-ready clients and those who are in need of more individualized services**: it is not one-size fits all.
- WorkSource has a **constant pool of job seekers qualified for the active job listings**.
- WorkSource consistently **serves all geographic locations within the region**, not only the urban centers.
- A **system that connects youth to work experience**: having many internships and career exploration opportunities between high school students and employers.
- A **shorter needs assessment process for job seekers** and efficient partner referrals to one another throughout the system.

Partnerships and Systems Integration

- **A system that partners well with its economic development organizations** throughout the regions and state
- **Awareness throughout the system about the full range of services**, staff responsibilities, and ability to access from various locations throughout the system.
- **Integrated data management** for all providers and partners with system access to all job seekers and employers.

What is working?

Overall:

- **There is a recognized level of passion and mission-driven care among the staff** and partners in this region; the staff has tremendous commitment even under duress.
- There is much **willingness among all the parties to “partner.”**
- There are bountiful services with admitted overlap.

Services to employers and industry groups

- **Customized recruitment** has been very well received and continues to be a positive model.
- **OJT programs for select employers works well** when WorkSource and the employer have a strong relationship.
- **There are offices where job seekers feel welcome** and are supported by knowledgeable staff who collaborate with other agencies for effective referrals.

Services to job seekers and youth

- **Effective work is occurring in the area of job seeker portfolio development:** where resume, interview skills, job search readiness components are provided.
- **Free on-line training and digital resources are widely available** as well as short term training opportunities through WIA and DOL grants.
- **NCRC prep and testing are working well** as assessment tools for entry level positions, its use is increasing and there is community buy-in.
- **“Prove It,” REA Welcome, Voc Rehab – Youth Transit Program, Lane Youth Program-WIA, TANF and the Trade Act Account** are positive programs that have been successful.
- **Work-search workshops for UI claimants** are operating well with satisfactory attendance levels; as is the utilization of the job readiness self-paced tutorials.
- **There are effective job fairs taking place** and paid internships for adults and youth.
- **The veteran case management programs** with assessments and individualized plans are working well.

Partnerships and systems integration

- **Labor Market Information** and reports tailored to specific communities.
- **Use of Skype and social medial links for Trade Act** programs is working and positive.

What do we need to do differently or innovate?

Overall

- WorkSource needs to allocate funds and resources where the greatest need exists.
- WorkSource needs to have **consistent branding and name identification** throughout the system.

Enhanced services to employers and industry groups

- **Expand and refine customized recruitments** for employers.

- Increase resources for **work-based training** that can quickly be applied to **part-time, temp-to-hire, and incumbent worker populations** to skill up employees as needed.
- Enhance interactive ways to **gain higher quality employer-driven information about job openings**, qualifications, pre-screening needs that can be used to continually improve WorkSource recruitment services and identify proactive training and job preparation needs for the applicant pool.
- **Continue to promote the NCRC to employers**, and market it as a “carrot”...a value-added tool for screening applicants; enhance the accessibility of the NCRC to accommodate language and disability.
- **Work with specific employers and industry sectors to identify certifications** needed to qualify applicants and link with community colleges for accessible educational delivery.
- **Develop specialized apprenticeship opportunities** for hard-to-fill jobs.

Enhanced services to job seekers and youth

- **Have greater emphasis on programs for youth** to become workforce ready: enhance summer work programs and career education in high schools, change statutes/rules where needed to allow greater opportunities for youth to experience and train for jobs.
- **Provide sector focused, basic skills training that combines basic skills with applied industry knowledge.** For example training for trades and manufacturing would include reading a tape measure or machine instrument panel; hospitality sector would include customer service and basic sales transactions.
- **Reinforce successful OJT** by offering an orientation and basic skills and behavior training prior to first day at employer site.
- **Promote the use of “Prove IT” and expand its use:** as it has been a successful program on a small scale.
- **Change policies so that job seekers are not disqualified from certain programs for taking “survival” jobs.**
- **Enhance access to WorkSource centers:** consider scheduling on weekends and evenings.

Enhanced partnerships and system integration

- Develop a **systematic approach** to for staff to learn about the array of WorkSource services; **share best practices** among partners, and **enhance operational communication** among partner agencies.
- **Create co-location opportunities where possible and share expertise that can “travel” throughout the region/state** based on asset mapping of WorkSource systems and service expertise
- Develop a stronger connection with community colleges to **provide greater support for the GED and ABE programs** with course delivery that is convenient for those working, single parents and others.
- **Have one system application** for all agencies to eliminate data entry duplication; where staff has access, where the system recognizes the various program requirements, and where there is an electronic check-in for job seekers and employers.

What is critical to 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 Southern Willamette Valley region was to achieve their vision?

We must have a **unified vision with agreed upon outcomes** that are widely embraced from senior leadership and through all levels of the WorkSource system. We must be sure we are measuring the right things in a consistent manner with **standardized performance metrics** and the ability for partners to hold one another accountable.

We need **unified branding and effective marketing** to job seekers and employers. We must reach out in ways that are informative about the full range of services, that are professional and friendly, and where offices are warm and welcoming. Local, regional and statewide messaging should be consistent and there needs to be a strong component of appeal to the youth market.

It is essential to have **adequate resource for training** workers for job-ready skills. To help job seekers be on a path to self-sufficiency, it is not enough to assess their needs or recommend specific careers. We need to provide training that is tied directly to jobs. OJT, apprenticeships and incumbent worker training.

It is imperative that we have a consistent and **effective assessment/triage process** from the first point of contact with job seekers: where client needs are quickly assessed, entered into the common data base and referred to jobs and services.

Our effectiveness and impact depends on **an information system that has a shared database and set of communication protocols** that reduces redundancy in data input and can better track services and outcomes to employers and job seekers. Start with more consistent program eligibility requirements and data intake information about customers.

To help reduce the gap between employer job opening and the quality of the applicant pool, it is critical that we are more proactive in **accessing job trends and skill gaps by regional industry sectors** and connecting recruitment information from employer services to job preparation and skills training for job seekers.