

### WIA Reauthorization Recommendations

The Wisconsin Workforce Development Association (WWDA), a consortium of eleven Workforce Boards working to address economic and workforce development on a statewide basis, strongly encourage the U.S. Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions to take steps to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 this year. By strengthening the public workforce system through reauthorization of WIA, they can help our nation develop the skilled workforce it needs and provide its citizens with the career opportunities they deserve.

It is the position of the WWDA that through the reauthorization process, changes to WIA should be focused on issues likely to enhance the program for employers, job seekers, and incumbent workers. The following recommendations were submitted for the Employment and Workforce Safety Subcommittee's consideration as they deliberate reauthorization and initiate changes that result in a more effective and efficient public workforce system.

**Local Oversight and Administration:** *The locally administered workforce development system established under WIA should be continued. Chief local elected officials are charged with appointing business and community leaders to the Workforce Boards so that local needs are appropriately identified and addressed. Local Workforce Boards are instrumental in ensuring the workforce system addresses local needs and is business-driven, resources are maximized through the formation of collaborative partnerships, stakeholders are convened around critical workforce development issues and education/training programs are available that provide individuals with access to high demand jobs. Specifically, the following provisions should be addressed as they currently are provided in WIA:*

- Clearly identified roles and responsibilities of the chief local elected officials and locally appointed Workforce Boards.
- Majority representation of business on the local Workforce Boards, as well as state board.
- Local One-Stop Centers administered under the guidance and jurisdiction of local Workforce Boards and accountable to the Boards for the expenditure of all funds.
- Local public-private partnerships are encouraged but specifically how those partnerships can best support and enhance the local workforce development system is determined by the Workforce Boards.

**Training & Innovation for the 21st Century:** *Our nation's economic strength will depend on our ability to train and prepare skilled workers for the jobs of today and tomorrow. The WIA program provides the opportunity for individuals to acquire skills needed for first time employment, career advancement, or re-employment in a new occupation. Innovation and flexibility are essential to the success of the workforce system. Recommendations for your consideration include:*

- USDOL and states should promote regional collaboration through financial incentives and competitive grant awards to Workforce Boards that, in collaboration with the private sector and stakeholders, will allow them to undertake initiatives that address regional workforce needs.

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- Expand emphasis on strategies and services to engage employers to make the system more relevant to the needs of business and better coordinate workforce and economic development
- Maintain comprehensive One-Stop Centers that provide a full range of services to individuals and businesses and a network of service delivery options. Brand these centers consistently across the nation so that customers can identify service sites.
- Utilize career pathway programs as a strategy for building a workforce customized to the needs of local labor markets and promoting diversity in the workplace.
- Allow local areas the flexibility to match training investments to the needs of local industries and workers.
- Eliminate the mandatory sequence of services so local WIA systems can offer services (core, intensive, training) in any order or combination as required by the individual job seeker and local market conditions.

**Accountability and Transparency:** *As chairs of the Workforce Boards and business leaders, we recognize the importance of accountability and transparency and support full disclosure as to how WIA funds are expended and reporting of outcomes/results achieved. However, accountability and transparency should be required for all federally funded programs. In addition, measures of success need to be reasonable in light of economic conditions and populations served. Therefore, we offer the following recommendations:*

- Establish common measure across multiple workforce and partner programs.
- Provide local flexibility for adjusting measures based on economic conditions or demographics of populations served.

**Funding:** *The following recommendations related to WIA funding would significantly improve the workforce system's delivery of services based on local area needs and result in more effective use of WIA funds:*

- Continue targeted allotments for youth, adult and dislocated with increased transfer authority between the funding streams based on local demand for services.
- Increase the amount of the state allotment that is formula allocated to local workforce areas for the provision of direct services and administered under Workforce Boards.
- Provide separate and distinct funding for the local One-Stop Centers at the national level or from each of the mandatory system partners.
- Include a "hold harmless" provision in legislation that limits any reduction in funding, from one year to the next, to no more than 10%.