

3.6 PROTOCOL FOR LOCAL PARTNER STAFF

Instructions to site visitors: Bullets below each question represent probes for important details; depending on how well you are doing on time, try to make sure respondents touch on each of these issues. Text in brackets [] should be tailored based on the state or local area. Sections in gray are the high priority sections for this respondent.

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is [NAME] and I work for [Mathematica Policy Research/Social Policy Research Associates]. I am part of an independent research team conducting a study of WIOA implementation on behalf of the U.S. Department of Labor. Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this conversation.

The purpose of this three-year study is to help DOL understand how states are implementing changes to the core workforce programs authorized under Titles I and III of WIOA, as well as how those changes are influenced by integration with other partners such as adult education, vocational rehabilitation, and TANF. To help us better understand WIOA's implementation, we are conducting site visits to 14 states, including two local areas in each state, to learn about their experiences. The information you share will help us understand the range of experiences that states have had, including key successes and challenges.

We have about [duration] for our conversation. I want to let you know that all interview data will be reported in the aggregate and your name will never be mentioned in any report that we write, though we might use quotes from your interview to illustrate findings, without using your name.

I would also like to record our conversation so that I can listen to it later as I complete my notes, and I will not share the recording with anyone outside of the research team. Being part of this discussion is voluntary, and you may choose not to answer a question if you wish, or to pause the recording at any time. Do you have any objections to being part of this interview or to my recording our discussion?

Okay, I'm going to turn on the audio recorder now.

Respondent Background

1. [If not already known for each person participating in the interview]
 - a. What is your official title and role?
 - b. What are your main responsibilities related to implementation of WIOA?

A. Governance and Planning

1. Local Plan Development

1. What input did you have in the state plan, and how did the state plan influence your local plan?
2. Were you involved in your local planning process? [If no, skip to #6).
3. Describe your general planning process for developing your local plan. What entity and staff members led the process?
 - a. How and to what extent were you involved?
4. Did this process differ from previous local plan development efforts?
 - a. Was the process longer than with previous plans?
 - b. Was your program more involved? Less involved?
 - c. How did any changes to the process from prior planning efforts improve the final plan?
 - d. What were you able to achieve that had not been possible before? What did you lose, if anything?
5. Do you have any lessons to share on developing your local plan around what worked well or has been challenging?
6. Have there been changes in federal or state funding for the workforce system that have affected your plan or how the plan will be implemented?
 - a. If there have been significant cuts to funding, how are you adjusting the system in response to these cuts?
 - b. What will be the impacts of these cuts on infrastructure, programming, and service delivery?

2. Regional Designations and Regional Plans

1. How satisfied are you with your state-designated region under WIOA?
 - a. Do you think it accurately reflects your regional labor market?
2. Has being part of a region helped you to better engage with regional employers? With regional economic development entities?
3. Were you involved in developing the regional plan? How was your program/agency represented in conversations about the region or the regional plan?
4. [If yes]: What challenges did you experience in developing your regional plans? What worked well?
 - a. Is there anything you think should change related to the regional planning process for the next time?
5. Going forward, how will your program/agency be involved at the regional level?

3. Local Workforce Development Board Role

1. How, if at all, have the role and approaches of the board changed under WIOA?

a. Is it more strategic, more innovative, more focused on continuous improvement, more focused on improving service integration?

b. Why has the role of the board changed?

i. New board mandates under WIOA?

ii. Required changes in membership?

iii. Some other reason?

2. Has your program/agency's membership in the local board changed under WIOA? How has this affected how you operate or how you work with other partners in the workforce system?

a) Employer Engagement

3. How has employer representation on the Board changed, and how have these changes affected employer engagement in the workforce system?

4. What policies and strategies has your local board adopted to support employer engagement? How successful have these been?

a. How have these strategies changed how you operate or provide services?

5. How have these efforts and activities changed the workforce system in your local area?

b) Sector Strategies

[Note to visitors: this may not be applicable to most partners, with the exception of secondary education if they are using or exploring a career pathways approach, or potentially YouthBuild/JobCorps]

1. What policies and strategies are you implementing to increase the use of sector strategies in the workforce system? Involving new partners, expanding services and training options, targeting new populations, etc.?

2. Has the focus on developing and expanding sector strategies been at the state, local, or regional levels? Where/who are you receiving guidance from on how to implement these strategies?

3. What funding sources are being used to develop and support your sector strategy programs and initiatives (e.g., local formula funds, WIOA state set-aside funds, Title II or IV funding)?

B. AJC System

1. AJC Certification

1. Were you at all involved with the AJC certification process? If so:
 - a. What challenges did you face and how did you address them?
 - b. What worked well in the certification process?
 - c. How useful do you think the certification process is in ensuring AJC effectiveness, accessibility, and continuous improvement? How could it be improved?
2. Have there been any changes to the status of any centers in this local area as comprehensive vs affiliate centers, or any changes expected? If so, how are these changes affecting your customers?

2. Infrastructure Funding and MOUs

1. How does your MOU (excluding resource sharing components) differ from the last one you had under WIA?
2. What costs were included in your budget for One-Stop infrastructure and other costs?
 - a. Why are you contributing for those components?
 - b. How much was cash versus in-kind? Why?
3. What was the process for working with the LWDB determining proportionate use and relative benefit for your program?
 - a. How well did that process work?
 - b. How could it have been improved?
4. How has the WIOA RSA requirement affected your partnership (either positively or negatively)?
5. How often is the LWDB reviewing your agreement (for issues like value of non-cash contributions, proportionate use and relative benefit)?
 - a. Are there any challenges related to this review process?
6. What challenges did you face in the process of developing your MOU and budget?
7. Has your state agency taken any steps to facilitate negotiation of One-Stop operating budgets (e.g. meetings at the state level, with state partners, to facilitate their participation)?
8. Did your area achieve consensus on your IFA?
 - a. [If so]: Why do you think your area succeeded?
 - b. [If not]: Which required partner(s) did not agree? What were the sticking points? Where are you in the process of reaching agreement?

9. How helpful was the guidance provided by your state and USDOL on resource sharing and MOUs? What could have been more helpful
10. What TA have you participated in on MOUs and resource sharing?
 - a. How helpful was this TA?
 - b. What could have been more helpful?
11. What additional guidance or technical assistance do you need from your state or USDOL on MOUs and resource sharing?

3. One-Stop Operator

1. What do you see as the role of the One-Stop operator?
2. What is your relationship with the operator and how often do you communicate or receive guidance from the operator?
3. How and why, if at all, has the operator's role changed with the implementation of WIOA?
4. What do you see as the role of the AJC manager?
5. What is your relationship with the manager and how often do you communicate with them? What do you usually communicate about?
6. How and why has the AJC manager's role changed, if at all, with the implementation of WIOA?
7. Have you experienced any challenges working with the operator or AJC manager to implement changes under WIOA?
8. How, if at all, do you think these changes in what entity serves as the operator under WIOA will affect AJC operations?

4. Collocation at AJCs

1. Across all the AJCs in the local area, how often is your program collocated at comprehensive centers? At affiliate sites?
 - a. What do you think are the primary reasons for this?
2. [If program is not collocated at comprehensive AJC(s)]: Are you providing access to services via training an onsite staff member or via a "direct linkage"?
3. Why did you opt for that approach and how is it being operationalized?
 - a. What challenges and benefits have you experienced with each approach?
4. Has your collocation at AJCs changed since WIOA implementation? If so, how and why?
5. What guidance have you received from the state on collocation of partners at AJCs under WIOA?

- a. Did that guidance change from what was provided under WIA? If so how?
- b. Is any additional guidance needed?

C. Overall AJC Streamlining & Accessible Services

1. Accessibility

1. How integrated and streamlined is service delivery in the local area?
2. Please describe any new state or local policies and actions that promote a more seamless, accessible and customer-focused workforce service delivery network.
3. To what extent has the state or LWDB emphasized customer or human-centered design as a key method for making your state's One-Stop career center system more customer-focused?
 - a. What problems or goals do you plan to address through this approach?
 - b. What challenges and benefits have you encountered in operationalizing it?
4. Please describe any state or local efforts to improve the accessibility of One-Stops for individuals with disabilities (e.g. policies, additional funding, or training).

2. Referral Process

1. Have you experienced changes in how customers are referred to you, or in how you refer customers to other partners since WIOA? Please describe these changes and why they occurred.
2. How frequently do you make referrals to partner programs?
 - a. Which partners are you most likely to initiate referrals to?
 - b. Which partners are customers most frequently referred to your program from?
3. How do you make referrals to and from other partners?
 - a. Do staff provide contact information for the program to a customer?
 - b. Do staff connect directly with the program they are referring a customer to?
 - c. Do staff submit a referral via shared MIS?
 - d. Or, is there some other referral process?
4. Do you track your referrals to partners? Is information shared about referred customers with the program the customer is being referred to?
5. What do you think is the most successful aspect of your referral process?
6. Is there anything about the referral process you would like to improve?

3. Co-enrollment

1. About how frequently are your customers co-enrolled in partner programs? Which programs and for what reasons?

2. How, if at all, do co-enrollment processes differ from referral processes?
3. How, if at all, is information about your co-enrolled customers shared with partner programs?
4. How and why has co-enrollment or the information exchange about co-enrolled customers changed since WIOA, and why?
5. What is the most successful aspect(s) of your co-enrollment process?
 - a. What requirements particularly facilitate co-enrollment?
 - b. Are there factors that impede co-enrollment?
6. Is there anything about local co-enrollment processes you would like to improve? Is there any additional guidance or assistance that would be helpful to you in improving your experience with co-enrollment?

4. *AJC Partner Meetings*

1. Are there regular AJC partner meetings? (If no, skip to cross-training)
2. Are these meetings for individual AJCs or only across the local area?
3. Do you attend regularly?
4. Who from your program attends these meetings? Program managers? Line staff? Both?
5. Has the nature or frequency of these meetings changed since WIOA? What effect have these changes had on the workforce system or how you operate?
6. How helpful have these meetings been?
 - a. Is there any way they could have been improved?

5. *Cross-training*

1. Have you organized or participated in any cross-training sessions across different programs since WIOA?
 - a. How helpful have these sessions been?
 - b. Is there any way they could have been improved?
2. In what other ways—if any—do you have the opportunity to share program information with other partners?
 - a. How well do these other methods work?

6. *Use of shared MIS*

1. Which management information system (MIS) do you use? For what purposes?
 - i. Case management?
 - ii. Participant tracking?

- iii. Performance reporting?
 - iv. Fiscal reporting?
2. Can other partners use this system too? If so:
 - a. Can all partners view data? Are there specific fields that are restricted?
 - b. Can all partners enter data into the system? Are there specific fields that only some partners can enter?
 - c. Can all partners revise data? Are there specific fields than only some partners can modify?
3. How do you ensure that the data being entered into these systems by different partners is accurate?
4. How are you protecting the security of the data being entered and stored?
5. What partner systems do you use and how do you use them? Have you changed your use of partner MISs since WIOA?
6. How important is it for seamless services that partner programs use the same MIS?

D. Performance Accountability

1. Common Measures

1. Have you faced any challenges implementing the WIOA common performance measures?
2. Have you faced any challenges in implementing state-specific performance measures?
3. Have you faced any challenges in implementing local performance measures?
4. Have you received guidance on how to implement the new measures? From whom and was the guidance useful? What other guidance would be helpful to you?

E. Services for Job Seekers and Employers

1. Has WIOA changed your approach to providing services to businesses? In what way?
2. What strategies have you implemented to increase the use of work-based and job-driven training (such as OJT, apprenticeships, transitional training, internships)?
 - a. What work-based training models are most commonly used in your local area?
 - b. How is your local area working to improve the use of registered apprenticeship?
 - c. Are there regulations around apprenticeship that could or should be relaxed to improve the use of registered apprenticeship in your state/region?

3. Please describe your efforts to increase the use of registered apprenticeship programs.
 - a. Have there been any challenges related to including apprenticeships on the ETPL?
4. Please describe your efforts to improve access and services to more barriered customers, including disabled customers and those with low basic skills.
5. Have you received any guidance or TA from the state on improving services to customers with barriers? How helpful was it?
6. What, if any, additional guidance should USDOL or your state should provide on serving customers with barriers?

1. Partnerships

1. How would you assess relationships among core partners? Required partners? Other partners?
 - a. Has this changed because of WIOA?
 - b. If not, why do you think WIOA's focus on enhanced partnerships has not affected your partnerships?
2. Are there sufficient systems in place to ensure regular and effective communication between partners?
3. What have been the key challenges and successes related to increasing collaboration across partners?
 - a. Are there differences in the extent of collaboration between core partners versus other required partners, such as UI, SCSEP, Veterans programs, and TANF?
4. Overall, how integrated are workforce services across the core partners now?
 - a. Has this changed because of WIOA?
 - b. What changes reflect this more integrated service delivery? For example, are case managers of different programs meeting more often to discuss co-enrolled clients?
5. [If respondent feels workforce system is *not* integrated]: Why do you think WIOA's focus on enhanced partnerships has not affected the integration of services?

2. Systems Change

1. Overall, do you think the workforce system here has changed as a result of WIOA?
 - a. If so, what are the major changes you can attribute to WIOA? E.g. employer engagement, partnerships, services more streamlined, data sharing, others?
 - b. If not, do you feel systems had already begun to change prior to WIOA, or that efforts under WIOA have not yet been effective in changing the system?
2. Have there been any negative, unintended consequences of implementing the WIOA regulations?

- a. Are there ways in which you feel the new regulations actually make it more difficult for you to achieve your goals?
3. [If respondent doesn't think WIOA has changed the system]: Do you feel systems had already begun to change prior to WIOA, or that efforts under WIOA have not yet been effective in changing the system?
4. What additional changes are planned or needed to transform your workforce system to meet the goals of WIOA?
 - b. What changes would you like to see to make the workforce system better overall?

3. Guidance and Technical Assistance

1. Of the TA provided by DOL national and regional offices on WIOA implementation, which assistance has been most helpful?
 - a. Which TA formats and types of materials have been most useful for you?
2. Are you satisfied with the level of TA DOL has provided on WIOA implementation?
3. Have you accessed the ION site to obtain TA materials or guidance on specific issues? If so, which issues?
4. In what areas would you like to receive additional TA?

Wrap-up

1. How would you describe your overall progress to date with WIOA implementation?
 - a. Where do you still have plans to make significant changes?
2. Beyond what we've discussed today, are there other areas you would like to highlight?
3. Are there any other areas of WIOA implementation our study should explore?