

# The Future of WorkSource

## Executive Summary

The Future of WorkSource is a joint project of the Oregon Employment Department and Local Workforce Investment Boards to examine the effectiveness of WorkSource—what the system needs to do in order to provide value and meaningful impact to its customers, how 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.

Large regional forums with employers and service providers were held throughout the state, as well as four additional employer focus groups in rural areas. In total, more than 700 people participated in these forums. As part of the project, job seekers who recently utilized WorkSource services were surveyed and over 870 responses were received.

The following is a synthesis of what businesses, job seekers, service providers and workforce partners around the state wanted to share with the Oregon Employment Department and Local Workforce Investment Boards about their perceptions and experience with WorkSource.

### Employer Highlights

Employers from around the state shared common concerns and challenges. These included:

- Many applicants lack basic skills.
- Applicants are missing other base skills like customer service, use of common software, etc. critical to many Oregon industries.
- Many applicants, especially those under 35, lack technical and vocational skills.
- Employers are seeing less early work experience and work readiness skills among those under age 25.
- Use of staffing agencies and temp-to-hire employment strategies continue to rise.
- Employers rely heavily on different forms of work-based training.
- Employers are struggling to use apprenticeship programs.
- Employers are concerned about retirement and succession planning.
- Structural cliffs in government assistance make it difficult for lower income workers to transition back into work.

Employers in rural regions face additional challenges in finding, training and retaining workers including:

- A high portion of seasonal employment is filled with workers holding multiple jobs.
- Geographically disbursed businesses often mean longer commute times and higher costs for job seekers.
- Having to go outside the region to find professional, technical and management level positions.

Drug abuse, especially the use of methamphetamines, is a serious problem that needs to be addressed as part of an overall employment strategy. Rural employers also had a more difficult time accessing WorkSource services due to the distance between company sites and WorkSource offices.

### 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 and where there was a broader pool of applicants with a wider range of skills and education.

Training stood out as a highly valued and underserved function within the WorkSource range of services. The top three immediate training-related needs expressed by employers across the state were:

- Increasing incumbent worker training to help businesses maintain critical occupations and replace the increasing number of skilled jobs available due to retirements.
- 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 and apprenticeships to get new workers in the door and up to speed as quickly as possible.

There were four high value services that employers identified as foundational services for maintaining 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 skill development centers, and to establish trade schools.
- Enhancing youth programs that provide early work experience and job readiness skills.
- Focusing career planning and job preparation services on opportunities in regional industries.

Finally, employers wanted to see a more consistent branding of WorkSource and a concierge type system for more seamless services. Employers also sought assistance with intergenerational workplace dynamics and succession planning.

## Provider/Partner Highlights

WorkSource service providers and partners were asked to define what a customer-based system should look like and what was required to deliver effective services. When asking what they needed to "get right," most recommendations did not require new or additional funds, rather a shift in how resources are being used. The shared vision and key services included:

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

- Having a more uniform branding of WorkSource with consistent and collaborative marketing.
- 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.
- Developing a common set of customer-focused metrics that are used to set program goals and measures within individual agencies or organizations.

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

- Allocating more resources toward work-based training that accommodates 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 assessment process for job seekers (rather than a one-size-fits-all welcome procedure).

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

- Developing a more systematic way to work with regional industry sectors and business groups.
- Systematically analyzing hiring trends and critically needed business skills to develop proactive training programs and in-depth profiles of local industries for career planning and job preparation services.
- Having stronger collaboration between small business development centers and chambers of commerce in order to 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.

- Creating more strategic connections between WorkSource and K-12 educational partners to share information about local careers and help youth understand the importance of job readiness skills.
- Providing more opportunities for early work experience to all youth, not just those who are high risk or high performing.

Rural areas appeared to have some additional challenges, mostly due to geographically disbursed offices and customers that require more flexibility regarding service delivery.

## Job Seeker Survey Summary

Job seekers were asked questions about their perception about WorkSource, services used, the satisfaction with services, the reason for not using services, and what they would like to see in future services.

- More than 80% of job seekers knew little about WorkSource prior to their use, or viewed it narrowly as a place for unemployed workers.
- Almost 90% of respondents first came to WorkSource due to their unemployment claim; few came because they were seeking services outside of unemployment.
- Once in the door, respondents used WorkSource primarily for related job placement services.
  - More than 80% thought job placement services met or exceeded expectations.
  - More than 60% of those dissatisfied had some level of postsecondary education and commented that services were too basic or jobs did not match their skill/experience level.
- Training and skill development services were far less utilized – ranging from 8-17%; often lower in rural regions.
  - Approximately 70% of those using the training-related services thought they met or exceeded expectations.
  - Those dissatisfied with the services noted schedules were inconvenient or not offered often enough, or that the program restrictions and/or content made them less than optimal.
  - A significant portion of respondents noted they did not know about certain services, or wanting to use them learned they did not qualify.
- Job seekers value and want to see more accessible training and skill development services. The gap between services that respondents valued and those that they used clearly indicates that current training services are not adequate to meet the potential demand.
- iMatchSkills (job-matching software) was not well utilized; almost 60% of those starting iMatchSkills did not complete it.
- Customer satisfaction with staff was very high. Statewide, over 90% of respondents had a favorable experience interacting with WorkSource providers.

Findings from the job seeker survey data had high correlation to input from employers and providers.

- Misperceptions about WorkSource prevent those not seeking unemployment insurance from using the system, narrowing the pool of more qualified applicants significantly.
- Services are not geared toward those with higher education levels.
- Customers view personalized coaching as very useful.
- Customers value training programs, especially work-based programs, and seek 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.
- Regions with lower levels of partner integration and co-location had the lowest customer satisfaction rating.

# 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 Summary

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

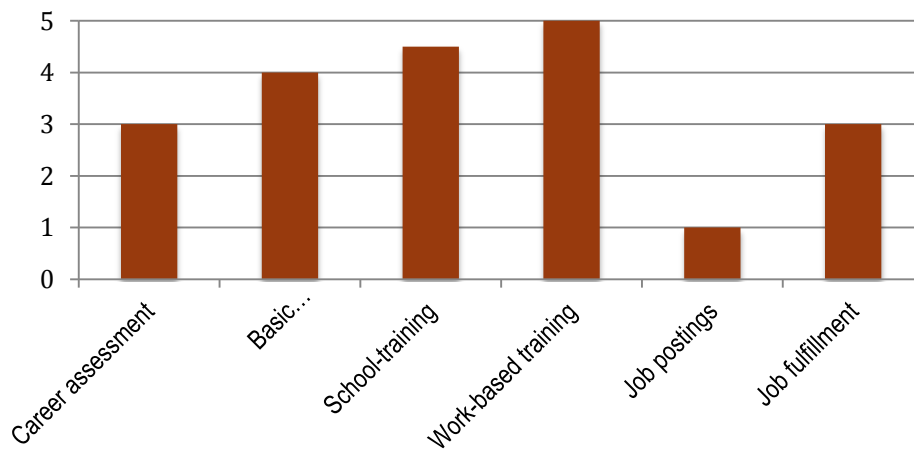
Employers view the WorkSource system as a set of inter-related services, where more efficiencies and impact could be gained through enhanced coordination and improved marketing of available services. To achieve this vision, businesses want WorkSource to have a **broader pool of applicants with a wider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

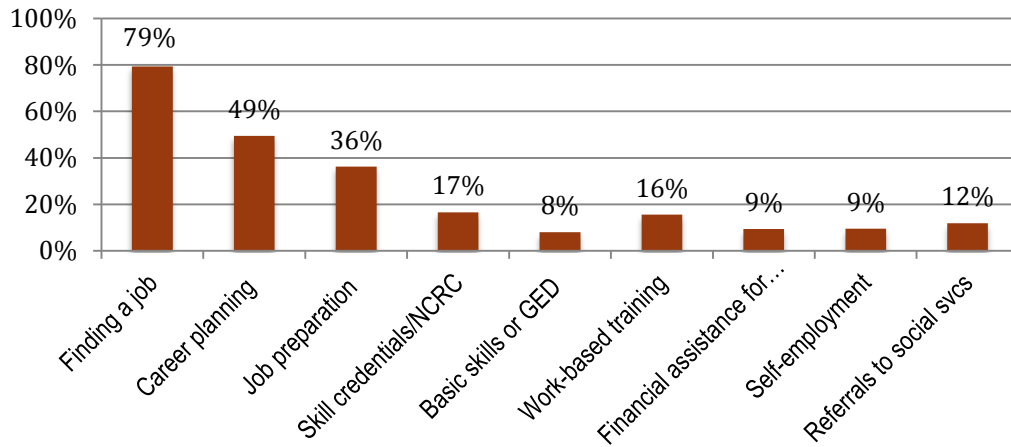
- **Policy refinements:** The ability to leverage resources and improve the impact of workforce services by examining and adjusting policies such as apprenticeship requirements, how UI impacts seasonal industries and jobs, the use of technology and social media to reach and communicate with customers.
- **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.

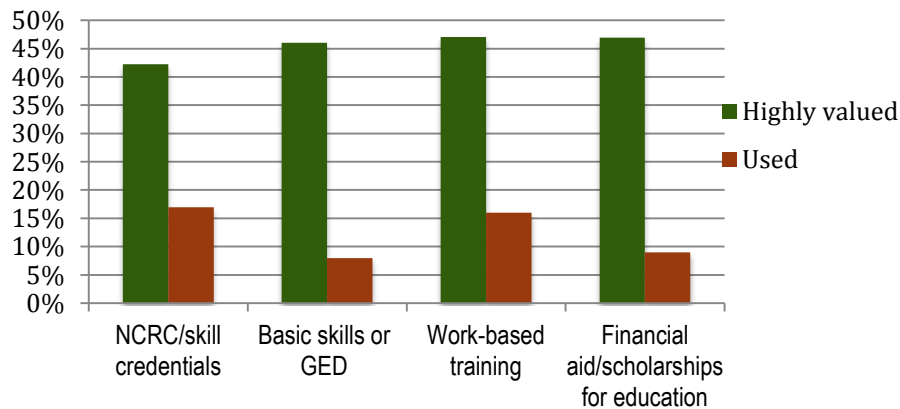
- More than 80% of job seekers knew little about WorkSource prior to their use or viewed it narrowly as a place for unemployed workers. This underscores perceptions of WorkSource still having the stigma as the “unemployment department.”
- Almost 90% of respondents first came to WorkSource due to their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

## **PART II: Regional Reports**

**Northern Coast**

**Central-Southern Coast**

**Metro Region**

**Mid-Willamette valley**

**Southern Willamette Valley**

**Southern Oregon**

**Central-South Central Oregon**

**Eastern Oregon**

**Rural Employer Focus Groups**



# NORTH COAST FORUM

## Seaside

March 18, 2014

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

### Part I: Employer Session

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

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

##### Trends in finding qualified workers

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

##### Trends in training and retaining workers

- **Most training**, especially with smaller businesses, is **on-the-job training**. This trend is likely to continue for both new and incumbent workers. Training, however, comes after the worker has been determined to be a good "fit" with the company. That is why temp to hire is used in many places where there is significant OJT.

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

#### Perceptions about WorkSource

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

### What Employers Value:

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

#### Training Services

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

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

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

applicants who are motivated to apply their skills in a new way.

#### Assistance with talent acquisition

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

### Desired Allocation of Resources

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

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

This suggests that WorkSource:

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

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

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

This suggests that WorkSource:

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

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

This suggests that WorkSource:

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

investment.

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

This suggests that WorkSource:

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

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

This suggests that WorkSource:

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

## Part II: Provider-Partner Strategy Session

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

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

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

#### Overall

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

#### Services to employers and industry groups

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

#### Services to job seekers and youth

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

#### Partnerships and systems integration

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

education-based and work-based training that ties-in with the current and anticipated workforce needs of regional employers and job markets.

## What's working?

### Overall

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

### Services to employers and industry groups

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

### Services to job seekers and youth

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

### Partnerships and systems integration

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

## Where can we do things differently or innovate?

### Overall

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

### Enhanced services for employers and industry groups

- **Create more options and greater flexibility in the delivery of short-term, work based, and just-in-time training.**
- **Work with groups of employers** to be more **proactive in understanding employment needs, skill**

- requirements and “fit” preferences** in order to identify qualified applicants and make well-screened referrals. WorkSource to work across offices collaboratively to find good candidates.
- Connect WorkSource and community college training resources to **develop incumbent worker training for skills that cross multiple employers**. For example there is a significant need for supervisory training that can be conducted for groups of employers.
  - Enhance assistance to small businesses. Identify workforce needs and assist them with effective recruitment and selection processes. This can be achieved through collaboration between WorkSource and small business development centers.
  - **Design and deliver training and coaching to assist employers to create productive intergenerational workplace settings. Employers and workers** from different generations need to better understand each other and training in this area is needed.

Enhanced services for job seekers and youth

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

Enhanced partnerships and systems integration

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

**What must we get right?**

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

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

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

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

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

**Training, staff development and in-service days should occur regularly for WorkSource partners.** This will serve to cultivate the desired culture of collaboration among partners, facilitate awareness about the full range of WorkSource services, build relationships among staff and offices, and ensure a way of sharing ideas, tools, pilots and results.

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



# 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

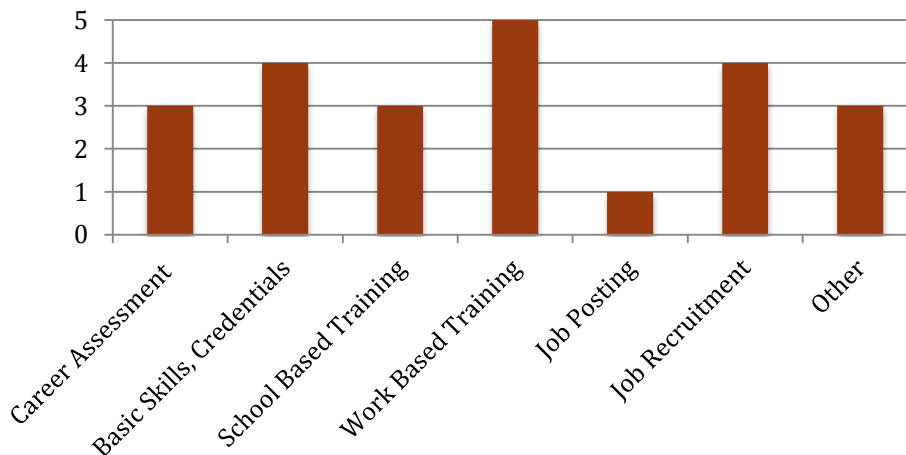
- Employers would like a **consistent WorkSource brand** or “no wrong door” approach to how the region’s workforce services are provided. They would value not just more integration of services but **shared expertise that could travel around the region** to reach more employers.
- Employers see value 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 & 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.

# METRO REGION FORUM

## Wilsonville

April 3, 2014

*On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, approximately 86 employers, business groups and service providers gathered in Wilsonville to discuss workforce issues in the Metro 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 Metro Region:

*We asked employers what trends affect how they find, train and retain employees. What challenges did they face in this part of Oregon and how these challenges affected their business.*

##### Trends in finding qualified workers

- **Companies are increasing their use of staffing and temporary agencies.** Utilizing a temp to hire approach helps employers find qualified workers who have been screened for “fit” and basic skills, and who can be evaluated during the temporary period for regular employment status.
- **Students graduating high school have less interest in working in the trades.** Employers believe that the lack of vocational training and exposure to industry related topics during the K-12 educational years preclude young people from discovering their talents in these areas. Students have little hands-on experience with machinery and with mechanical tools resulting in fewer young workers with the base level of skills to qualify for entry-level construction and manufacturing positions. In addition, school counselors may not perceive these jobs as leading to good careers, and consequently do not encourage students to pursue them.
- **There are fewer young workers today with some type of work experience** than in past generations. Employers perceive a decrease in high school cooperative work programs, summer jobs, and internships that is affecting the work readiness of high school graduates. This is manifested in the lack of interview skills, poor interactions with co-workers, punctuality and attendance issues, inappropriate dress, continual use of cell phones at work.
- **Small businesses have difficulty hiring** especially if work has seasonal aspects. Most workers want and need full time and year round work. Many workers are penalized when they accept part time work while participating in state and federal support programs.
- **Companies are hiring and re-hiring a greater number of post-retired workers** because of their specialized skills and knowledge of company culture and expectations. In some cases, this makes good sense for employers, however when positions require training in newer technologies, some employers are not willing to make the investment in the older workers.
- **There is a scarcity of job applicants with specialized technical skills.** Private and public organizations are competing for qualified information technology (IT) professionals. Some employers will raise pay

levels, offer sign-on bonuses, help find jobs for the trailing spouse/partner, and find creative ways to attract and retain the talent they need.

- **Generational differences impede hiring.** Many managers find it difficult to relate to the millennial generation and their inability to “fit” into traditional workplaces in terms of their shorter tenures of service, perceived lack of work ethic and need to advance quickly. This creates a reluctance to hire the younger workers.

#### Trends in training and retaining workers

- **Employers are providing greater flexibility of work schedules.** Many employers who want to hire and retain young workers to fill their talent pipeline recognize the need to adapt schedules to allow time for school and various types of training and development.
- **Employers are implementing their own paid intern programs to fill entry-level positions with younger workers.** One employer developed a customized internship program to recruit, train and evaluate new young workers. Approximately 20 interns per year are placed in all functions of the company with a cost per intern of \$3,800 and a company ROI of \$11,000. Many new hires come directly from their own internship program.
- **College internship programs have been successful, but have decreased in recent years.** Six-month internship and cooperative programs for college students enrolled at PSU, George Fox, Oregon Institute of Technology and others have led to many direct hires. Unfortunately, the recession and lean budgets have decreased the number of internships offered by employers.
- **Employers want strong base skills in mechanics, work ethic and aptitude for their trade positions rather than specific machine skills.** Employers are beginning to invest in company-specific training once they are assured of the base skills.

## 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 value work-based training** and school to work training programs aligned with local and regional workforce needs, including:
  - Work-based training (e.g. **OJT**) designed and targeted for immediate openings.
  - **Incumbent worker training** assistance to advance employees to higher skill/wage jobs.
  - **On-site supervisory training** to develop internal talent to take on management responsibilities, rather than hire externally for new employees unfamiliar with their organization’s processes and culture.
  - School programs that provide the basic training, **credentialing**, and certifications to qualify workers for professional and technical jobs.
  - Training designed to aggregate the needs of small businesses and industry groups to maximize resources and support the training of greater numbers of employers and job seekers in the region.
- Employers want support from WorkSource in **coordinating internships and apprenticeships** in areas of program design, oversight, performance assessment and funding. Employers, particularly of small businesses, do not have the bandwidth to manage this type of program, but see it as a viable pipeline for new employees.

- **Manufacturers and other businesses would value more funding for trial service programs** such as the Multiple Engineering Cooperative Program (MECOP) that allows employers to evaluate worker performance over a period of time prior to investing in OJT.

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

- **Employers want to see strong basic academic coursework as requirements for high school graduation.** They want students to receive the core knowledge and learning skills needed for many skilled jobs in the region. Particularly, students need competency in basic math, physics, writing, critical thinking, etc.)
- **Industry needs more “school to work” programs to fill their job pipeline.** They would value high school and middle school students who are exposed to vocational training and skill development at an early age, and where teachers and counselors identify students with industry aptitude and provide them with career information and work experiences. Employers also want to see schools promote careers in the trades as desirable occupational choices.

Assistance with Talent Acquisition

- **Employers want a ready pool of qualified and skilled applicants** who will match their job requirements because WorkSource knows each employer’s organization and “fit” needs. Therefore, employers value the **comprehensive screening of applicants** for basic workplace behaviors as well as the required skill set. Businesses want WorkSource to **verify credentials and assess for mechanical aptitude**. They want WorkSource to be measured and **rewarded for qualified referrals and successful placements**, rather than simply the number of referrals.
- Employers value having ongoing relationships with WorkSource partners to provide the **ability to proactively adjust to hiring and succession planning needs** to ensure that retirement and replacement jobs can be filled without much loss of productivity. Small businesses would like WorkSource to provide assistance in HR planning—developing their knowledge and skill in effective interviewing, hiring and workforce management, particularly as they start their businesses.

Collaboration with WorkSource Partners

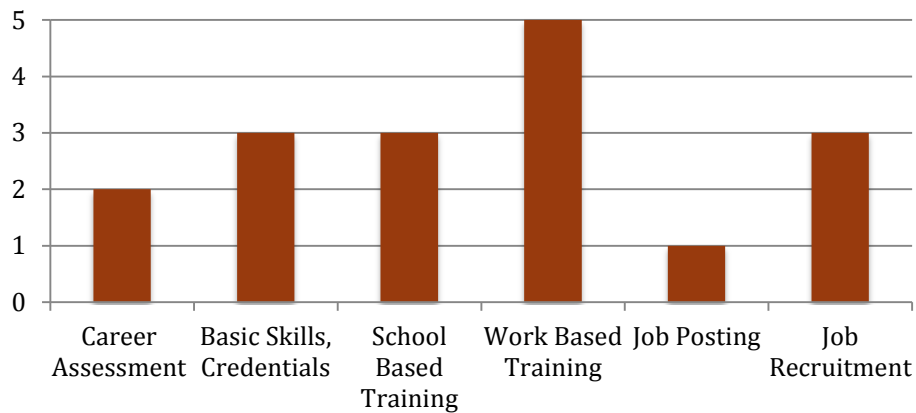
- Employers would like to see WorkSource take a **greater leadership role in connecting the needs of local industries to education and career planning in schools**.
- **Employers would like WorkSource examine policies that affect the ability for youth to obtain work experience in local industries.** This is especially valuable to manufacturing and trades where there are perceived restrictions with BOLI.
- **Employers would like to increase their awareness** about the full range of programs available to them through the WorkSource system. They want to hear about the successful “stories” of services, programs and outcomes.

## 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 metro 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 employers attending the Wilsonville forum (a high concentration of manufacturing, construction and staffing agencies) clearly wanted to see additional resources allocated toward **work-based training**. More **on-the-job training, incumbent worker training and apprenticeships** top the list of needs. Manufacturing companies noted that bringing a new worker up to the skill or knowledge level to be productive took many months if not a year. Therefore, once an employee was hired and had the right fit for the company culture, it was essential for the company to build on their internal knowledge and specific training rather than recruiting externally. This underscored the need for incumbent worker training as a retention strategy, preventative measure against unemployment and a competitive advantage for the business. Making apprenticeships easier for companies to use was the other aspect of work-based training that was emphasized. Companies felt there were BOLI restrictions that prevented them from fully utilizing apprenticeship options.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Increase resources dedicated to work-base training and ensure that a portion of funds are available for incumbent training needs.
- Work with BOLI and employers to understand perceived apprenticeship issues and identify ways to resolve key issues or provide employers with a better understanding of the system.

These three functions received equal weighting by employers:

**Job recruitment** services were not only highly valued by employers, they wanted to ensure adequate resources were maintained for the **customized recruitment** function. In addition, employers viewed recruitment as a broader function and wanted to see **job information by industry sectors**. In this way WorkSource could be more **proactive in understanding base skills** for each industry and working with the job seeker functions to provide career assessments and training to enhance the applicant pool.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Expand the customized recruitment program throughout the region.

- Develop job skills and job readiness information by industry sector and identify proactive measures to enhance the pool of qualified applicants, working with regional economic development organizations and industry groups that already have a sector focus.
- Work jointly with other WorkSource departments that focus on career planning and basic skills training for job seekers in order to connect supply and demand issues in a more intentional fashion.

Similar to other forums, employers wanted to see the allocation of resources toward **basic skills and credentials** that emphasize **job readiness** skills as well as basic math and communication skills. Employers viewed **customer service** skills and basic understanding of how to use software for **basic business/office applications** should be considered as part of basic skills training. Employers were more concerned with being able to **verify industry-specific credentials** (e.g. welding) than spending resources on more generic credentials such as the NCRC, although many employers also admitted they did not have an in-depth understanding of the NCRC.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Develop or add to existing basic skills training the job-essential skills that employers seek (e.g. customer service skills and software competency for basic business applications), and for WorkSource to work with recruitment functions to understand the job readiness needs of local employers.
- Ensure there is a process by which industry credentials can be verified prior to sending an applicant to an employer.

**Employers want school-based training** to be focused on three elements: 1) **increasing vocational education** in high schools, 2) **integrating job readiness skills into high school curriculum** (and coordinating with the basic skills needs as described above), and 3) helping to aggregate demand for and **train employees on middle-skills** such as supervisory and project management.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Be an advocate with education for enhancing resources dedicated to restoring vocational education in K-12.
- Work closely with K-12 partners to ensure they understand the importance of job readiness skills and work to include these skills into curriculum.
- Work hand-in-hand with industry sectors and community colleges to customize training to leverage resources for middle skill training.

Overall, employers wanted a system where industry and government worked more collaboratively at resolving these very large and systemic issues. The tone of discussion was one of wanting to help and knowing that employers are partners in the workforce system.

With that said, there was a perception that WorkSource still operated as a push system—trying to push job seekers through the system to find quick employment (perhaps due to how the system measured outcomes). Employers defined effectiveness as a pull system that works primarily from the needs of local employers to ensure job seekers have the skill and fit to be productive employees with skills to find family wage jobs.

## 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 is a **welcoming system supporting all Oregonians** at all stages of their work careers-- including individuals currently employed in addition to those unemployed. A **system based on customer needs and outcomes** delivering services that will lead to careers with good wages and advancement opportunities.
- **We are a one-stop shop** approach with a single point of access for job seekers and employers whose individual needs are assessed and then guided to relevant services.
- **Business, government and academia work together** to expand our economy through an effective WorkSource system.
- WorkSource is a system that **teaches job seekers how to get a job, keep a job and grow in the job**. A system that also supports employers to hire an employee, keep an employee and grow an employee.

#### Services to Business and Industry Groups

- **There is business outreach with a single point of contact** providing staff the opportunity to develop relationships with employers and gain a deeper knowledge of their businesses and employment needs.
- **Employers are engaged** in the relationship with WorkSource because it delivers a meaningful benefit.
- **Certifications are employer-based** and help to qualify applicants for required basic and base skills that are industry specific.

#### Services to Job Seekers and Youth

- WorkSource locations are **easily accessible and located near public transit** and other service providers at the convenience of job seekers.
- **We have a user-friendly, single assessment process** and other job placement tools that are aligned with business and industry needs that can:
  - **Quickly route job seekers to the next step** in an individualized and streamlined way **without unnecessary or redundant efforts**,
  - Guide job seekers to all appropriate programs, services and training.
- Job seekers have access to **training that will prepare them for actual jobs** and close some of the skill gaps experienced by the unemployed.

#### Integration and Coordination among WorkSource Partners

- **Strong communication among all partners** that results in
  - Information sharing so all partners are knowledgeable about all services and resources,
  - All partners networked for referrals to one another, and

- o All partners marketing each other's services.
- **System-wide technology that is integrated**, user-friendly and utilizes a shared database where customer information is accessible by all partners for effective and efficient customer service.
- **Having an applicant tracking system that is compatible with employer systems** for easy download that eliminates double entry.

## What's working?

### Overall

- There is a **very good "spirit" of collaboration, communication and cooperation** among WorkSource staff, schools and employers on an informal and individualized basis.
- There is a **sense of shared values and commitment** to the mission of WorkSource by partners throughout the system.

### Services to Business and Industry Groups

- WorkSource and PCC have been effective partners with various employers in **designing and implementing OJT**, and there are pockets of other school-based and work-based training that is innovative and customized for employers that are taking place in the region.
- OED and WorkSource provide local and regional **statistical information about economic and workforce trends** that is useful to employers.

### Services to Job Seekers and Youth

- There is a **strong commitment to serving high barrier populations** with effective TANF programs.
- The **NCRC program works well for entry-level** job seekers in demonstrating their basic skills and willingness to invest in their job readiness.
- Union representatives and WorkSource partners combine outreach and co-facilitate job seeker sessions. This has proven to be an efficient way to market services and **provide well-rounded job readiness education**.
- There are some **successful apprenticeship programs** that were identified as good models. They occur at certain companies and are implemented according to collective bargaining agreements.

### Collaboration among WorkSource Partners

- There are positive and long standing partnerships and relationships among community colleges and WorkSource staff. This includes working together on programs that involve **basic skills and credentialing**.
- There are successful **partnerships between high schools and colleges in providing joint career programs** for students.
- Partners have found creative ways to support **job seeker access to college programs prior to securing financial aid**. This helps job seekers get the training needed to qualify for better paying jobs while working in an under-employed status or at a lower paying position.

## Where can we do things differently or innovate?

### Overall

- Move away from simply processing people through the system and provide a **more individualized approach and less one size fits all**.

### Enhanced Services to Employers and Industry



- Update workshops to have more industry specific relevance and **re-design basic skills courses to have more applied learning**. This will help build the skills that local and regional industry groups and employers are requesting.
- **Establish better and ongoing relationships with business and industry groups** in order to understand talent needs and their sector strategies. Move toward the flexibility of having a wholesale as well as a retail approach to serving businesses. **Become a strategic convener of business and industry** representatives to discuss common needs, best practices and consolidated services.
- **Actively engage the business community at their location** and learn about the challenges and needs for their success in order to provide relevant and proactive workforce support.
- **Simplify processes for businesses and employers to access incentives such as tax credits**. Employers are generally overwhelmed by the complexity and the time required to take advantage of many services available to them.

#### Enhanced Services to Job Seekers and Youth

- Implement more **one-on-one time and high touch customer service with job seekers** to individualize their progression and steps through needed system services.
- Find ways or work to change policy in order to **provide financial aid for job training that does not meet the current credit-level threshold**. It is hard for some people needing to work immediately to gain additional education, short-term credentials or certificates when financial aid doesn't cover it.
- **Improve one-on-one and small group coaching and mentoring**. This will allow for real-time assessment and directing guidance where needed for job preparedness, effective interviewing and skill development.

#### Enhanced Integration and Coordination among Providers and Partners

- Create a single, shared on-line system for providers, job seekers and employers who recognize that much improvement is needed for iMatchSkills and i-Trac. Develop the system so that it can:
  - Identify the array of programs for which a person is eligible,
  - Share information among providers (like the concept for medical records),
  - Track services for employers and job seekers.
- **Provide ongoing training for WorkSource staff** to understand the services, programs, best practices and innovation ideas of all partners.
- **Consolidate the on-boarding process to include programs and services beyond those offered by OED**. Include information about and networking referrals to all key partners. For example, partners can facilitate sections of the on-boarding process.
- **Enable the use of media and technologies that can target different age groups**: texting or tweeting for younger customers; promoting services on Facebook and email, etc.

### 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 metro region was to achieve their vision?*

**Develop stronger customer-driven metrics with appropriate resource allocations.** At the heart of WorkSource is our ability to connect employers with qualified workers. To enable this, we need shared outcomes and measures that define what customer success means to WorkSource, and then develop individual program metrics in support of these overall goals. We need to ensure that resources are allocated in such a way that we can reach these goals—that there is the **proper allocation of funding for training, coaching, and industry sector work with employers**.

**Re-brand WorkSource as a community resource center.** We need to **develop a larger pool of applicants** for employers and to **serve the broad base of job seekers**. We need to be perceived as more than the

“unemployment” department. To develop a strategy that will reach out to job seekers needing UI, those with jobs, those needing training, and youth. It also means that offices should be located on transit lines with easy access.

**Develop and sustain strong system-wide partnerships** to provide a strong base of coordinated services. This will mean that we have an in-depth understanding about what each of us does and how we all contribute to the system. That we have marketing materials and websites that co-brand and co-market all services, as well as periodic strategy sessions where we share ideas, best practices and changes to programs.

**We must have support tools and systems to act collaboratively**—this will require being able to share or have a common data system with consistent eligibility and assessment processes that can feed to all programs, flagging various programs and incentives for which a customer may be eligible. It will also require the ability to retain and enable access to customer data for more than 2 years.

# MID WILLAMETTE VALLEY FORUM

## Salem

March 20, 2014

*On March 20<sup>th</sup> 2014, approximately 63 employers, business groups and service providers gathered in Salem to discuss workforce issues in the Mid-Willamette 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 Mid 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.*

##### Trends in finding qualified workers

- **Employers are placing a greater emphasis on soft skills** and paying more attention to attitude and fit.
- **Increased automation** in the workplace is requiring **higher technical skills** by employees. This is true in a retail store or a manufacturing setting.
- Companies **need to be lean to compete** today. Therefore, employers are leery of investing in an employee who isn't the right one.
- With a lack of basic skills in the workforce, employers are experiencing a longer "ramp-up" period for new workers to be productive. To ensure new employees will be a good fit, businesses are using more **staffing agencies and temp to hire** arrangements to ensure basic skills, communication skills, and fit with their work environment.

For these employers, the temp to hire process greatly reduces permanent turnover, since most potential hires that did not fit fell out during the probationary period.

- There seem to be **more barrier populations among applicants in the Mid Valley**, such as the disabled and ex-offenders.
- Employers are seeing a trend where employees want to feel good about the organization they work for—there is **more desire for workers to align their personal values** and interests with jobs.
- Employers noted that **employees are showing less willingness to work hard and be trained** than in the past. Businesses experienced this trend with workers in lower wage jobs and those in more skilled entry-level jobs.
- Businesses **hiring at low entry-level wages** noted it was very **difficult to compete with applicants receiving unemployment insurance** (UI) since their starting pay may be less than what they receive on UI.
- Employers are **seeing youth without basic job readiness skills and not seeing many younger applicants with the same level of work experience as years past**. They believe there is very little emphasis in K-12 to expose youth to job-related skills and knowledge of local industry sectors. They recognize that employers have a responsibility to help and participate in community led programs such as the model taking place at **McMinnville High School**.

### Trends in training and retaining workers

- **The older workforce is moving on.** People during the recession held on to their jobs; now there is movement toward more retirement. Recession also meant businesses didn't hire new workers so it will be necessary to create a path for employees to move up in the organization.
- The lack of job readiness in the region means **employers are doing more internal training that involves back to basics and social skills.** Employers large and small are conducting more OJT and supervisory training in an effort to advance their own employees into higher level jobs.
- Since many employers note difficulty finding skilled workers, they are **changing the way they "skill up"** entry level workers and are providing **more mentoring** at the earlier stages in the workplace.
- The fluctuation in **government regulations**, especially in construction-related industries, has caused businesses to **spend their limited training time and dollars on regulations education rather than skill development.**
- Competition for workers is occurring and some employers are **strategically positioning themselves to be an employer of choice** with good wages, good management, cross-training, providing employee training and development, educational support and adapting to various languages in the workplace. These employers are showing an overall **willingness to meet the challenges of the new and changing workforce.**

### **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

- Since employers have more success training and moving people up from within, they strongly support **on-the-job or work based training efforts.**
- **Vocational education and training** was highly valued not just for the training of workers for jobs in the trades, but for the applied learning and problem-solving skills it taught to all students.

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

- Employers see significant value in investing in **youth programs** that provide young people work while building **job readiness and essential workplace skills.**

#### Assistance with talent acquisition

- Since small businesses have few HR resources and little time, they value the **customized recruitment and screening services** that staffing agencies and WorkSource provide. In addition they often want help in writing job descriptions and developing their own interviewing skills.
- Larger employers valued methods that could **verify skills or credentials** so there was a common baseline of skills with candidates.

#### Collaboration with WorkSource Partners

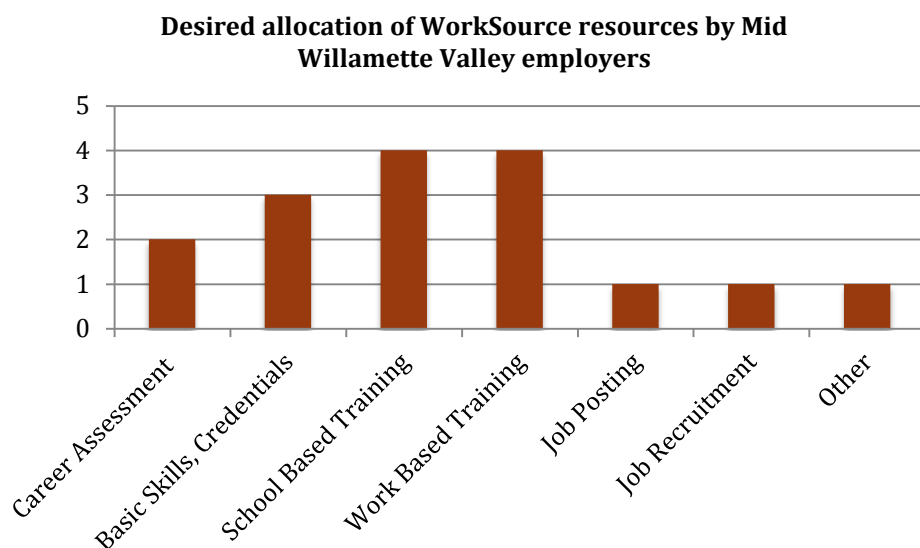
- Employers want to see state agencies and state-supported **workforce partners work more collaboratively around employment issues.** A more central entry point or seamless referral system that helps them quickly find workers and get the support they need to train and retain their employees. The DMV model was used as an example.

- With a higher than average percent of ex-offenders in the region, employers would value greater **collaboration between the Department of Corrections and WorkSource** to ensure successful re-entry into the workforce.
- Employers would like to see aggregated **information about local industries, the respective career paths that they produce and skills needed for jobs in the region**. They want that that information to be updated and readily available to students, educators and workers.

## Desired Allocation of Resources

We asked employers to note 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 or the need for resources to be allocated.



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.

In the mid-Valley region, employers' vision for where they wanted resources allocated **varied by type of industry**. Manufacturing and trades wanted more work-based training, while service sector businesses were more focused on basic skills. Job recruitment functions were less important for large employers, but important for small employers with no HR staff.

Since almost all employers preferred to train up their existing employees with organizational knowledge and a proven performance record rather than trying to recruit someone with higher skills, but no experience with their business, **incumbent worker training** was key to their success.

This suggested that WorkSource:

- Allocate not only **more resources toward OJT**, but allow at least part of work-based training funds to be used for incumbent worker training.

- Allow employers using temp-to-hire services to access OJT without having to do a “work around” that required significant paperwork and time.
- WorkSource training programs staff work closer with community college to develop and **deliver more sector-specific or cohort training** for skills that have a common need across an industry sector. (Employers noted a disconnect between the two partners)

The Mid-Valley forum had a significant number of manufacturers, construction trades and logistics related employers that attended. Their **greatest need in school-based training was for vocational (Career Technical) education** especially in high school. They wanted to see more internship or work experience related to vocational education, although many noted that BOLI regulations prevented youth under 18 from gaining hand-on experience in many situations. This lack of hand-on experience meant that students had not only fewer skills but also less interest or understanding of career possibilities.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Work with K-12 and community colleges to have a collaborative effort to enhance and coordinate vocational training programs and connect them more closely with area employers.
- Work with BOLI to examine and change policies related to the regulations restricting students and young workers from actively participating in workplace operations.

Businesses stressed the importance of **early youth work experience and career exposure**. They find young workers lack base skills critical to job success. The **combination of career assessment and school-based training** was important to these employers. This combination included 1) having good information about regional industry sectors and about the skills needed for local jobs; 2) having more interaction between high schools and local employers with opportunities for students and career counselors to learn about local jobs; 3) providing job readiness skills to youth through summer or seasonal programs.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Has **current sector information on regional employers**, careers and their related skills, and that this information is shared and coordinated with education providers from a career guidance perspective as well as a skill development perspective.
- WorkSource and schools work together to **get employers into the schools** to talk to students and counselors.
- More resources are allocated to **youth work experiences that go beyond youth at risk populations**. Shorter or project-based experiences that are 2-6 weeks in length, including **more partnerships with community organizations** and nonprofits (such as Habitat for Humanity) as a place for work experiences that could fulfill community service/project requirements and provide job readiness skills at the same time.

The Mid-Valley employers also stressed that the WorkSource system needed to do a better job is **skills assessment and credential verification**. Employers noted a need to verify skills or credentials that job seekers indicated they had. Employers also found it hard to understand which credentials or level of credential had meaning to their company. For example, employers knew about the NCRC but many did not use it because they were confused about which level had the best fit for their company.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Have a system or way by which key credentials can be verified prior to job referrals.
- Business specialists and other staff working directly with employers are trained on how to help businesses understand which credentials are meaningful to them and how they can be best used for effective screening and hiring processes.

## 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

- The WorkSource system provides easy access for job seekers and employers. For employers—they need to get who and what they need quickly. For job seekers, the access needs to be extremely easy so that no matter where someone enters the system there is seamless service and common enrollment. **The system as a whole is simple to navigate with great tools that are well-connected and user friendly.**
- The **WorkSource system will have a sufficient number of locations** to serve customers and **intentional connection among partners** including better connections with employers, schools and WorkSource system.
- WorkSource is **effectively marketed** so customers can see all possible services and that the system is easy to understand and simple to access.
- Customers want to use services because we use simplicity in our processes from start to finish. The **system is customer centric**—not process centric.
- **The value provided by the WorkSource system is so obvious**—it's the first place to go... "top of the list."
- A WorkSource system where every **provider and partner is open to REALLY changing** how we do things to be more effectively.

#### Services to employers and industry groups

- **Increased responsiveness to employers** by providing services that customers truly value and which are customizable to business needs with their specific outcomes and goals in mind.
- A WorkSource system that **builds awareness of the services, achievements and challenges with employers at periodic interval**. In addition, provides a **feedback loop to groups of employers** on state and regional levels.
- WorkSource markets itself as a **coordinated system that is effective and efficient for employers to access** and receive the full scope of relevant services.
- WorkSource is **very involved with and understands the special needs of small businesses**.

#### Services to job seekers and youth

- WorkSource is a system where **job seekers can see and understand the whole process**.
- **The welcome process is where job seekers can receive a personal touch, quick assessment of job needs and proper progression of services**. There is a simple menu of services inclusive of K-12 and community college programs, certifications, OJT, etc. In addition, **the system is flexible** enough to allow for customization to their specific needs and goals.

- Work-based **skills and education are integrated** to improve progression, and job seekers receive coaching at appropriate times.
- Students and **youth have a clear understanding of career opportunities** and skills needed when they enter the workforce so they are informed and **prepared** to go to work.

#### Partnerships and systems integration

- WorkSource has **clear goals and expectations across the system** so that all providers and partners strive for consistent system outcomes and report on similar measures.
- **All partners act as the collective “we”** cross-promoting and utilizing all resources and understanding what others do. This minimizes all duplication and leverages all of the partnerships. (Envision the “Olympic rings” as the system with connection and overlap, but not duplication.)
- Workforce provides easy and **warm hand-offs throughout the system without “bouncing” the customer**. This includes streamlined career planning that is coordinated between WorkSource, K12 and community colleges.
- Provide **staff training to all WorkSource professionals** to understand the full scope of system services, develop a useful and sustainable network among offices and agencies, **support strong relationships** among staff and foster a professional work environment and flexible culture **throughout the system**.
- **WorkSource continues to provide co-location** where possible among providers and partners – OED, LWIBs, DHS, Community Colleges, etc.
- **Tools and technology are integrated across providers** so information is shared; Greater integration of IT systems.

## What’s working?

#### Overall

- WorkSource staff recognizes their desire to provide helpful and meaningful customer service and that they **currently have and want to retain good working relationships with each other and employers** in this region.
- WorkSource staff is pleased to have **access to a significant community college**.

#### Services to employers and industry groups

- Job postings and referrals work well for **employers who engage with more depth and intention** around their needs—this represents about 10% of employers.
- **Customized recruitments for employers** and job seekers are working well. This has resulted in the development of strong WorkSource-employer relationships with on-site visits and **in-depth understanding of jobs and operations leading to qualified referrals** and placements.
- There has been **success with vocational rehab referrals** and job placements with small businesses within the region.
- WorkSource working in alignment with **sector strategies to identify skills essential to groups of employers** for their recruitment and training needs.
- **OJT programs** have aligned with various employers to support unemployed job seekers in gaining occupational skills specific to current business needs.
- **NCRC works well for some employers** who need a way to assess basic skills.

#### Services to job seekers and youth

- The **WorkSource welcome process is very effective when it utilizes one-on-one assessments** and coaching and when job seekers are willing to engage and take advice from staff.
- **Youth programs continue to grow and receive attention** in this region. There have been positive results from a cognitive behavioral workshop model that is being piloted with adults. It focuses on the behavioral issues involved with a person’s ability and motivation to do well in the workplace.



- **Veteran services** have worked well in this region because they use a “**wrap-around**” **service model** and partners have a shared interest in the outcome.
- **Barriered and special populations** such as ex-offenders and TANF recipients receive services due to the availability of funding streams and resources to support needs involving transportation, child care and other job-specific costs such as uniforms.
- Sheltered work environments are successful in giving actual work-relevant exposure to job seekers and WorkSource training programs and workshops are effective in covering job readiness skills.

#### Partnerships and systems integration

- There generally is an **effective hand off from DHS to WorkSource** when dealing with job prep and work readiness coaching.

### What do we need to do differently or innovate?

#### Overall

- **Follow consistent protocols** across the system for effective assessment and triage of job seeker needs in alignment with employer opportunities.
- Establish procedures to **allow adequate time with customers** in providing quality assessment and job prep services.
- **Increase the awareness of WorkSource** services across the region through **high quality, consistent and effective marketing**.

#### Enhanced services to employers and industry groups

- Improve the **WorkSource system to interface with employers’ applicant tracking systems**. This would simplify the process of posting jobs, avoid double entry and reduce the frustration some employers have experienced.
- **Help employers write better postings** and job descriptions, particularly the smaller businesses that do not have HR departments.
- **Have more care about the quality match between the job seekers and employers’ needs**. The outcome of a good fit and relevant referral is the desired outcome, not just sending a person to fulfill a WorkSource measure. This may include working with employers to match skills vs. specific industry work experience.
- Provide staff with adequate resources as well as flexibility to **perform more on-site meetings with employers to achieve quality referrals and “fit”**.
- Work to modify rules **that would allow incentives to job seekers** to take positions that may pay less than their welfare benefits.
- **Increase the amount of training that is designed to develop basic skills**, work ethic, grooming, integrity, communications, follow-through and getting along with others in the workplace.
- **Examine policy changes to adjust BOLI rules** to support work based training for students and young workers in trades and vocational occupations.

#### Enhanced services to job seekers and youth

- **Enhance career planning programs at the K-12 levels**—start earlier and have students gain exposure to workforce needs and how their interests and skills align with occupations.
- **Provide ways for remote job seekers to gain access to a “person”** by phone and possibly by live chat when it is their preference at various stages of seeking WorkSource for services.
- **Revive vocational, career exploration and technical trade education** in high schools. High schools are in the best position to foster student thinking about future careers and provide exposure to work environments and jobs. There is a good example of a ready-to-work program at Salem Keiser S.D.

- **Increase funding through Career and Technical Education (CTE) resources** with a particular focus on disconnected youth.
- Explore ways to **provide some childcare and transportation assistance for the non-TANF** population that need transitional help when re-entering the workforce.
- **Find more ways (beyond iMatchSkills) to communicate** with job seekers that includes an easy way to get back in touch with them.

Enhanced partner collaboration and system integration

- **Encourage WorkSource staff to take opportunities to partner with other programs** such as parent classes that focus on soft skills that have relevant application to the development of job readiness skills. Such classes will strengthen desired workplace behaviors for success on the job.
- **Develop stronger collaboration between WorkSource and the Department of Corrections** in supporting the work readiness needs of ex-offenders.
- Enhance the **collaboration between WorkSource staff and community college workforce professionals**. There are opportunities to be more proactive in sharing employer needs and job seeker readiness for referrals.
- **Refurbish the data and information systems** used by WorkSource and give access to all providers and partners for effective communication throughout the system resulting in faster and up-to-date information to customers.

## 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 Mid-Willamette Valley region was to achieve their vision?*

**Continue to focus on programs for youth and strategic integration with trades and vocational education.** Career planning programs at the K-12 levels must be robust and align with local industry sectors and employment opportunities and sustainable career paths. Programs need to start earlier and have students gain exposure to workforce information and experiences and explore how their interests and skills align with occupations.

**Develop an employer-driven culture** in a way that results in actual ROI for businesses when working with WorkSource. This means employers need information and easy access to the full range of services and incentives available to them. Building deeper relationships with the businesses in the region will lead to better understanding of their challenges and workforce needs resulting in well-matched referrals and successful hires.

**Think and act like a system.** This means all partners must learn the best ways to work effectively together in order to provide services that are streamlined for our customers. We need to have a common data base system with one eligibility and assessment process that can feed to all programs with access to all providers and partners as appropriate and have system-wide shared measures for success.

**Recognize that job seekers have various needs at different stages of their careers** and job search efforts. This translates to a system that can assess and triage initially and provide the needed services quickly and effectively; providing only the right and relevant services. This results in using WorkSource resources wisely and providing services on a more individualized basis. Work-based training and educational programs, for example, are integrated to improve career progression so customers receiving support and coaching at appropriate times.

# 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

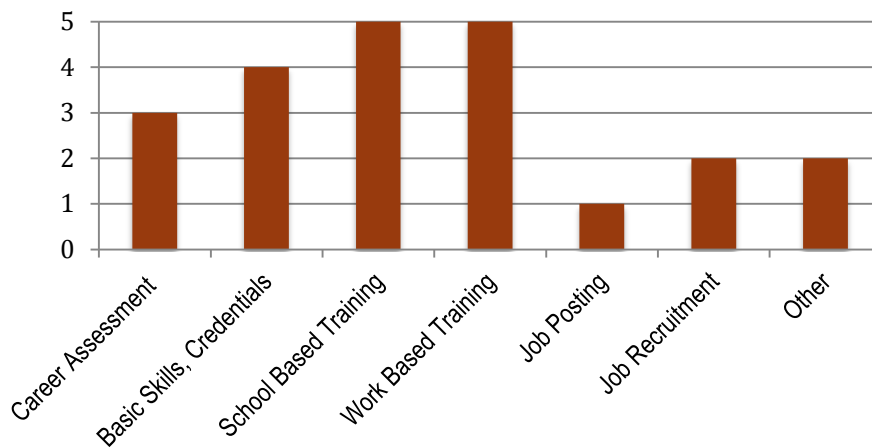
- Businesses value the **customized recruiting** services and the **verification of applicant's skills and credentials**. They would like to see more sector-specific specialists that have a deep understanding of skills and jobs for a certain set of industries.
- Businesses value having a **streamlined 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 valued 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 work well** when WorkSource and the employer have a strong relationship.
- **There are offices where job seekers feel welcome** and are supported by knowledgeable staff that 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 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 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.

# SOUTHERN OREGON FORUM

## Medford

April 14, 2014

*On April 14<sup>th</sup> 2014, approximately 71 employers, business groups and service providers gathered in Medford to discuss workforce issues in Southern Oregon 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 Southern Oregon:

*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

- Overall, employers noted the **quality of applicants seems less adept while the quantity of applicants is increasing.**
- There exists a perceived **lack of basic operational skills in manufacturing and trades** especially for positions that rely on meeting quality control measures.
- Employers are **using an array of recruitment resources** and methods to find employees:
  - Craigslist
  - Referrals from existing employees
  - Partnerships with OIT, SOU and Rouge Valley Community College
- **Social Media** has become important in recruiting: Facebook and Twitter for entry level and LinkedIn for Executive level positions. There is a trend in Southern Oregon towards spending **more time and effort in the hiring process**. Mistakes in hiring are costly and it was reported that hiring managers are **being more deliberate and careful**.
- Employers say they **rely more heavily on staffing agencies for temporary workers**. While this allows for a workforce that is “virtually on-demand,” employers recognize that temp status delays the employer’s training investment in the worker, and in turn the worker’s commitment and sense of belonging to the organization.
- **Rewriting job descriptions** is yet another approach these employers are using to clarify what their jobs really require. To make **job postings seem more “fun”** and to address the work-life balance concern, some companies are changing job descriptions to more of a **“day in the life” narrative**.
- **Mentoring during on-boarding** is fast becoming a common practice. This accomplishes two goals; **faster enculturation** of new employees and increased job satisfaction and engagement on the part of the mentors who usually enjoy imparting their institutional knowledge to the new workers.
- **The cost of transportation** in the region is expensive for job seekers traveling to interviews and the relative cost of the daily commute for workers in the entry-level positions.
- **Generational differences affecting behaviors and expectations** among workers were a concern among employers from the early boomer demographic. The upcoming generation is just as concerned about work-life balance as they are about having a career.
- **Employers noted that some applicants are applying for their open positions to satisfy unemployment insurance requirements** to demonstrate weekly job search activity. In many cases

these applicants are not qualified for the jobs. A possible solution mentioned was **better initial screening prior to referral**.

- **Employers have found that hiring workers for temporary and part time work during the off-season is difficult.** Many workers use unemployment insurance (UI) to fill in during off-season lay-offs and the UI policies often create a disincentive for job seekers to take the job.
- Employers are finding that **some job seekers won't accept positions if taking the job will cause an abrupt termination of their wrap-around governmental benefits.** Some applicants need transition time and a ramp-down period from reliance on government assistance. For example, if there is a concern over losing housing allowance or food assistance it can be a disincentive for a job seeker to choose the employment opportunity.
- Some employers noted **concern about expanding beyond the 51<sup>st</sup> worker** due to requirements of the Affordable Care Act.
- Employers are finding that applicants who lost jobs to no fault of their own are **less motivated to take jobs of less or equal pay.** It was suggested that perhaps a WorkSource program could **supplement the difference** for a period of time or until the employee catches back up.

#### Trends in training and retaining workers

- **On-line training & recruitment** is becoming more prevalent. Just in time or burst learning was mentioned as those approaches do not incur a full day of lost production.
- **Employers are emphasizing the Southern Oregon lifestyle** as a way to entice applicants to the region. It is seen as a part of the "compensation package."
- More businesses are **developing in-house training** for upward movement and for leadership/management development. While the companies know the skills, knowledge and abilities they need, many report they are **not well equipped to deliver** these types of training.
- The **Trio program** was mentioned as a success with one caveat; often the student who is eligible comes from a family where no one has post-secondary education or experience navigating the employment application process.
- **Tuition reimbursement** is an approach used by employers to retain workers. Several businesses noted that they will work with students and pay for all or a part of their higher education if they agree to work for the business for a specific period of time.

## What Employers Value

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

#### Training Services

- **Almost all employers place a high value on work-based training.** Work-based or on-the-job training that brings new employees and incumbent workers advancing to different or higher skilled jobs up to speed as quickly as possible. For some industries, including manufacturing, the return on investment for new hires is 12-18 months. Many would like to see the state share costs and risk in the new hiring process and noted models that are working in other states. An example specifically mentioned is the **Georgia Works model** which utilizes a 3-month 100% wage subsidy from Unemployment Insurance, similar to Oregon's previous Jobs Plus program for UI (the Jobs Plus still exists for TANF clients, but not UI clients). These programs help offset the high initial costs to employers..
- **Employers want to see customized training, especially where WorkSource and community colleges leverage resources** to deliver training that is aligned with business needs. Employers commented that curriculum creation took too long, sometimes up to 18 months to adjust to workforce needs. WorkSource training specialists should be more responsive and move "at the speed of business" as one person put it.

### Workforce Preparation: Career Planning, Job Readiness Skills And Basic Skills

- Employers find value in **the job preparation services** that WorkSource offers to applicants that include how to write a resume, present themselves in an interview, and other guidance in effective job searching. Employers, however, feel that not enough applicants take advantage of this.
- **Employers think highly of programs that engage them directly with high school students in areas of career planning.** They noted the following effective efforts:
  - **Careers in Gear.** A good idea but needs follow up as it takes place at the end of the school year and momentum is lost. Have refresher events throughout the year to reinforce career options. This could be followed up at the college level.
  - **Open houses** where businesses talk about what they do and what education it takes to join their company.
  - **Early work readiness** in high schools, in K-12, embracing more programs like Junior Achievement.
  - **Entrepreneurship programs** that highlight business skills.

### Assistance With Talent Acquisition

- Since many employers use staffing agencies, they view the **two-way communication between WorkSource and staffing agencies** critical for the development of a stronger applicant pool and more seamless referral processes.
- **Employers value good data and informatics.** They would like to see more analytics applied to the WorkSource system. For example, looking at pools of applicants for common skill gaps in order to proactively provide relevant and timely job readiness training, or understanding the seasonality of jobs to prescreen applicant pools for anticipated openings. Employers would also like to see recruitment and referral databases managed more like the popular and effective customer relationship management (CRM) systems used in business to manage sales relationships.
- Employers think highly of WorkSource's **customized recruitment** that offers active, focused job fulfillment services. The value is both immediate and long-term: businesses get qualified workers and WorkSource staff develop an understanding of the employer and their industry that continues beyond the immediate job placement.
- Employers and staffing agencies value **prescreening functions, especially drug testing.** Staffing agencies in particular would like to see drug testing as a requirement for receiving WorkSource services.

### Collaboration with WorkSource Partners

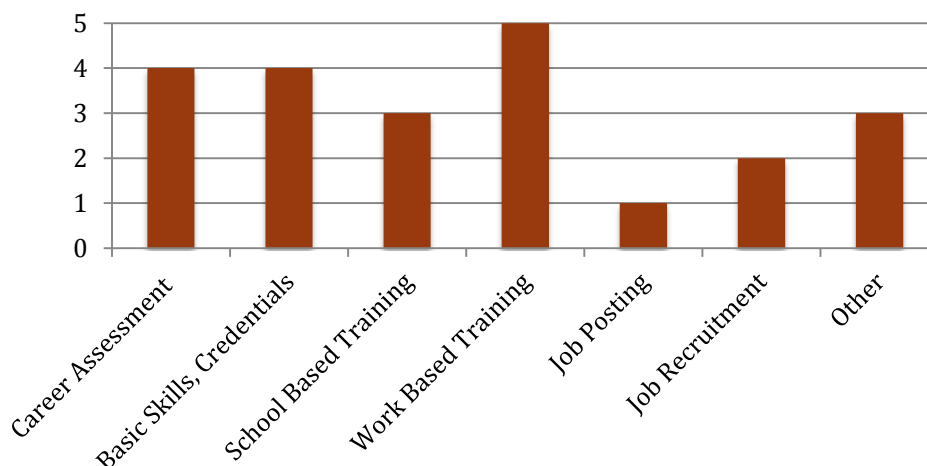
- Employers want to work with one contact and easily have access to all relevant services. They don't know what's available to them and want a "concierge" to lead them to beneficial programs and services seamlessly without concern about agency jurisdictions or provider boundaries.

## **Desired Allocation of Resources**

*We asked employers to allocate where they would like to see WorkSource resources allocated by key 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 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. The following is a summary in order of importance what they hoped to see in the future.*

### Desired Allocation of WorkSource Resources by Southern Oregon Employers



Employers in Southern Oregon noted the need for significantly more **work-based training** and it topped their list for resource allocation. Having more **flexible OJT funds for incumbent workers, and more apprenticeships** and career-technical education pathways are critical to their ongoing competitiveness. As with other regions, employers viewed this as a return on investment (ROI) issue. More training funds would mean their workers would be productive sooner and their business would be more successful. They also thought that there was a role for the state to cost share more accurately based on the actual costs and time to train new employees. For example, if it takes 6-12 months to get a new worker up to speed, and turnover risks are still high as employers continue testing for goodness of fit. A 6 month Georgia Works or UI Jobs Plus program would help to share the cost and reduce the risks, and workers would be considered temporary employee compared to the current Back to Work Oregon OJT program..

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Allocate more funds towards work-based training and enable a portion of those funds to be used for incumbent workers.
- Establish a tiered structure for training that is cost-shared based on an ROI model.

Employers also wanted more resources allocated toward **career assessment and job preparation**. Specifically, companies wanted the WorkSource system to have **more information about local industries** and careers, and ensure this information was covered in K-20 education for students and guidance counselors. They also wanted to see career assessment and job preparation include an understanding about various **work environments and working conditions** in order to set accurate expectations about the skills and behaviors required to be successful on the job.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Develop more robust information about local industries and jobs, including both skill and work environment information.
- Work with K-12 to share information about local careers and help bring employers into classrooms and career fairs.

**Basic skills and credentials** rounded out the top three requests for resources. In this category employers stressed the importance of **vocational skills** and the ability to **verify a worker’s credentials**. The lack of vocational education in K-12 meant that many applicants lacked the basic skills necessary in manufacturing and trades positions such as reading a tape measure, or operating a machine. Applicants were also found deficient in many of the basic **customer service skills** needed in retail and professional

service jobs. In addition, there was much conversation among the employers about applicants not understanding the business need for quality. In school a “C” grade means you pass. At work “C” grade work is not good enough. Such a low standard is not acceptable to most employers and will result in job termination. They would like to see the basic **concepts and applications of quality control** included as part of basic skills training.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Develop basic skills-training that includes more base knowledge and applied learning for customer service and quality control.
- Develop a system whereby credentials can be verified before a referral.
- Be an advocate for enhancing vocational education in K-12.

In addition to the traditional functions of WorkSource, this employer group placed significant emphasis on better two-way communications with employers and having a **more robust customer database (CRM system) that connected job seeker information with employer needs**. A way to systematically **analyze data from both the supply and demand side** to proactively identify gaps in skills or trends in hiring that could allow services to be more connected with local economies.

Other highlights included:

- School-based training resources centered on vocational education and early work experience for youth.
- Maintain customized recruitment and work more closely with staffing agencies.
- Address the cost to screen applicants, including mandatory drug testing.

## 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

- **Business needs drive** the workforce system, and workforce plans are **well integrated into regional economic development strategies**.
- **Employers and job seekers use the system** because it is **customer focused** and can easily respond to their needs at whatever stage or level of experience and education they may have.
- There is **no wrong door by which customers enter** because partners have a seamless referral system.
- The process **accommodates a combination of coaching with appropriately placed tools** and services so that there is both **consistency in the quality**, yet flexibility and **customization for individual customer needs**.
- **People are aware of WorkSource** and WorkSource is known for training, career development and other services beyond the preconception that it only assists unemployed Oregonians.
- **A broad cross section of employers are engaged in WorkSource** because the pool of potential workers and other business development **services are robust and responsive to changing needs**.

#### Services to employers and industry groups

- Funding is redirected to **support more work-based training**.
  - There are more **incumbent worker training services** that help increase business competitiveness and worker retention which prevents unemployment. Expand upon the region's successful PowerUp Academy.
  - There are more work-based training services such as the Georgia Works/Jobs Plus program, On the Job Training and other work-based trainings for transitioning workers.
  - There are **more programs for youth to gain work experience** that includes summer and seasonal work, apprenticeships, etc.
- WorkSource provides **services that help businesses be competitive** as well as find quality workers. For example, giving employers access to current salary comparisons.
- **WorkSource collaborates with staffing agencies** to broaden the applicant pool, and enhance the basic and base skills of candidates in order to better meet employer qualifications.

#### Services to job seekers and youth

- **Career information** clearly shows the basic, soft and technical skills needed for jobs in various **industry sectors** with additional information about **regional employer expectations**. Assessment tools are aligned with this information to easily create pathways for jobs seekers.
- K-12 and community colleges have **strong vocational education** programs **connected to regional industry**. Technical and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) programs at the region's 4 year higher education institutions (SOU and Oregon Tech) are also strongly connected to regional industry.



- There is a **multi-tiered, user friendly triage process** that quickly moves people into services pathways. For example, job seekers with experience and fewer needs can use self-service effectively, others may need a mix of personalized and self-service, and those with multiple needs that may require more coaching.
- Staff provides **personalized services with an advisor or coach that helps a customer navigate various referrals** with accountability is to the customer, not the process.
- There are **mandatory industry-directed hiring requirements, such as drug testing**, that WorkSource performs to pre-screen job seekers before they can use additional services, and occurs prior to the referral to employers.

#### Partnerships and systems integration

- All **partners collaborate with common vision, services and results—the broad “we.”**
- WorkSource staff is well-trained and cross-trained to understand how partners and providers contribute to the value chain of workforce services with visual maps of services and unique contributions of partners. Where possible services are co-located, co-marketed and co-branded with a shared website.
- WorkSource partners are **quality driven** with a share set of **customer outcomes that drive services**, rather than metrics tied to the quantity of services provided by each agency.
- **WorkSource and K-12 work closely together** to promote a broad range of careers that are tied to local industries as well as to student skills.
- There is a **comprehensive client records management system**:
  - Key information collected in **databases is shared among providers** resulting in less duplication of services and **easier transitions for customers** to utilize different services.
  - There are **cohesive metrics** used by all key partners.
- We have the ability to share ideas and pool resources so we don’t reinvent the wheel.

### What’s working?

#### Overall

- **Partners are working together** and share a passion for helping job seekers and employers.
- There is growing awareness about the **need for vocational training** although resources are not available yet.
- **Wrap around services** are assisting people with barriers

#### Services to employers and industry groups

- Services provided by the **small business development centers are working effectively** in helping the smaller employers in the region. In addition there is strong support for entrepreneurial efforts and **business incubation programs**.
- Supporting employer **job fairs** and marketing local career opportunities.
- **Work-based training** programs like Jobs Plus, and OJT are working well although more flexibility in delivery options and targeted content could better meet local needs.
- **Producing economic and occupational information** that is specific to regions and industries.

#### Services to job seekers and youth

- Reemployment eligibility assistance that offers **more coaching and personalized services** for job seekers.
- **Training programs that are industry driven** are effectively providing targeted and timely support to job seekers such as Power Up Academy and the Foundation Skills program.
- **WorkSource is helping applicants to get their GED and NCRC certifications** that positively affects job seeker self-esteem and employer interest in applicants.
- **Programs such as Career in Gear and Youth Success Expo** are bringing youth together with educational professionals and employers. These programs have been very successful in **exposing**

**students to careers in the region** and the opportunity to network with employers from all different industry sectors.

#### Partnerships and systems integration

- **Co-location of partners** with access to leadership has yielded greater efficiencies, effective referrals and stronger collaboration.
- Having **intentional networks of partners** who are providing important services to job seekers such as Southern Oregon Success, the effective alignment of DHS and WorkSource programs, and the collaboration of DHS with mental health services.

### Where can we do things differently or innovate?

#### Overall

- **Organize services and metrics that are customer-driven**, then **leaning processes** so there is more ability to serve individual customer needs across partners rather than batching services by agency.
- **Develop larger pools of applicants**; working with community colleges, staffing agencies and others to increase the number of applicants in the system.
- Establish a region-wide strategy that **brings together industry-education and WorkSource** to address **vocational education** needs and resources.

#### Enhanced services for employers and industry groups

- **Establish a process by which employer services are driven by a return on investment (ROI)** process that clearly defines the value to employers. This leads to **more employers using the system** and more job seekers seeking WorkSource services to access these jobs.
- **Develop sector specialists with WorkSource** that are well versed on regional industry needs and skills sets. Specialists are shared among regional offices.
  - **Specialists understand the “base” skills needed by each industry** (the level above basic skills that are common across multiple occupations within an industry such as mechanical aptitude or basic quality control for manufacturing or specific customer service skills for e-commerce companies).
- **Provide more and various options for targeted work-based training** that could include cost-sharing among regional employers (Georgia model). This will foster greater willingness on the part of employers to take the risk in hiring new workers. Provide additional resources for incumbent worker training, especially those that tie-in with economic retention and expansion projects. Connect WorkSource and community college training resources in these efforts.
- **Expand apprenticeship programs and career-technical education pathway programs** Partner with labor, utilities and other large private and public sector employers to enhance the use of apprenticeships and current or newly formed **career-technical education pathway programs**.
- Be more **proactive in understanding business employment needs** enabling WorkSource staff to refer qualified candidates who are a good “fit.” Employers will be more inclined to invest time and energy in bringing new employees up to speed.
- **Host employer fairs** where businesses speak directly to job seekers about skills, job readiness and workplace expectations. **Have WorkSource staff and staffing agencies attend** so they also hear and reinforce this message.

#### Enhanced services for job seekers and youth

- **Fund youth programs that provide work readiness skills and work experience.**
- **Retool iMatchSkills** or create **better and quicker assessment tools** that do not overwhelm new customers, is **tiered-based on the customer’s profile**, and where **information is used for more than job matching**.
- **Develop a coordinated triage system that would be able to** identify eligibility to other partner programs regardless of which door the customer entered and provide customized services so those

- with fewer needs can use self-service programs and those with greater needs access more coaching.
- Have an **advisor or coach** for customers with extensive needs **who stays with job seekers** through referrals and training; **give customers a single point of contact** that can when appropriate assemble a **“task force” or response team** based on needs.
- Supply **comprehensive information about all training services** so it is easier for partners and job seekers **to determine the best use of resources**. Partners need to work together to refine training services and focus on their niche so there is **less duplication and more resources available for reallocation to other identified services**.
- **Use technology that is already available and familiar to customers** such as Skype, texting, Twitter, Facebook, email. Use these technologies to route notifications among multiple customers and partners.
- **Ensure NCRC is available at all high schools and WorkSource centers**. Provide clear data demonstrating the value of the certificate for job seekers and employers.

#### Enhanced partnerships and systems integration

- Develop a **cohesive brand for WorkSource that consistently uses the WorkSource name with all partners, use language that is easy to understand** and create more co-location opportunities where possible.
- **Promote a culture of cooperation where partners have regular events** for sharing information about programs, services and what’s working well. Conduct **new WorkSource employee orientation that contains information about services from all partners**, not just the hiring agency or organization.

### 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 Southern Oregon was to achieve their vision?*

**Have a cohesive vision that is customer driven and shares metrics** that are consistently used by all partners.

**Deliver services that are demand driven** and implementing processes that **utilize lean principles** to increase quality while enabling more responsiveness and cost-effectiveness.

**Provide a user friendly, multi-tiered triage system** for job seekers that can create more individualized services based on needs. In keeping with the recognition that one size does not fit all, assessment resources can be reallocated to those needing additional coaching and individualized support.

**Establish more effective integration between WorkSource and K-20** to promote both career and job readiness skills to students, educational staff and parents; these educational programs should include applied learning opportunities to help set realistic expectations about working environments, salary levels and hiring requirements.

**Develop a shared data system** with timely programmatic communications that is easily shared among partners and has features such as:

- Universal eligibility built in so “total” service plans for customers are efficiently developed and managed.
- Ability to identify redundant services to facilitate the redeployment of resources to high need areas.

**Align staff expertise and programs** with sector and economic development strategies:

- Sector specialists who can be shared among offices in the region.
- Robust information on skills and workplace expectations that is communicated to all staff

working with job seekers.

# CENTRAL OREGON FORUM

## Redmond

April 15, 2014

*On April 15, 2014, approximately 96 employers, business groups and service providers gathered in Redmond to discuss workforce issues in the Central Oregon 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 Oregon 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

- **The aging demographic of today's workforce and the occurrence of increased numbers of retirements** has caused difficulty in finding replacements with higher levels of skill and for critical mid-level management positions.
- **There is difficulty finding work-ready individuals with basic skills.** Employers are defining "basic skills" to include one's ability to present themselves professionally in dress, grooming and conduct, have good communication skills and have foundational computing skills. Most jobs require some level of computer skills and this is now a basic entry level job requirement.
- **Employers depend on WorkSource to provide support in the recruitment and hiring of entry-level positions** with help screening resumes and verifying work history. They also look to WorkSource to hire Veterans when they can.
- **Specialized positions requiring more advanced skills are difficult to fill** and there is a reliance on **Craigslist** and out-of-state recruiting to fill those openings.
- Employers note **groups such as the Redmond Chamber of Commerce as being very successful** in connecting job seekers to employers.
- **There are different mindsets between the generations.** The younger generation is looking for a work-life balance while the older workers come from a "whatever it takes to get the job done" mentality. Some employers are trying to shift employees' expectations on both ends of the spectrum to become more "realistic".
- **Young workers do not have a positive or accurate sense of manufacturing or trade jobs** and the career opportunities that are possible for them.
- There is a **lack of vocational education in the schools** that creates a gap in meeting the workforce needs of many industries in the region.
- **The youth appear to have limited exposure to technical training, licensing and apprenticeship programs.** Central Oregon Community College (COCC) is available to support those needs. However, a degree does not always demonstrate proficiency. Skills testing also needs to be a part of the program.
- **Inter-company competition is occurring for skilled workers.** Local employers find they are hiring some of the same workers from one another rather than attracting new people into the labor market.
- **Many otherwise job ready applicants are failing the drug screens.**
- **Local area careers are unknown to the upcoming workforce.** Career fairs are good places for companies to gain exposure to job seekers.

### Trends in training and retaining workers

- **Employers are utilizing temp to hire positions**, on-call and part-time for filling seasonal and off-hour shifts. This is a successful approach when there is not enough full time work.
- **Employee perks are being offered in lieu of increased pay**, which is difficult to fund on an on-going basis. These perks include: greater employee involvement in the company, higher benefits packages, increased promotion from within and flexible time off.
- **Employers are recruiting out-of-the-region and out-of-state for technical and highly specialized positions** in engineering, information technology, etc. Trailing spouse/partner issues are often a concern.
- **Governmental regulations** make it difficult to give youth the opportunity to use tools and gain required skills for job readiness for many industrial jobs.
- **Young people** are ready to do important work but **entry level wages make it difficult to pay back student loans**.
- **Affordable housing is a challenge in retaining entry and mid-level management positions**. This is a part of the cost of the “**central Oregon lifestyle**”. This is especially true in the less than \$15.00/hour range. Also **limited public transportation** makes it difficult to get some workers to job sites.
- **There is a high degree of turnover due to the seasonal nature** of many jobs in the Central Oregon area. Criminal records checks have been shown to help alleviate some turnover rates.

### **What Employers Value:**

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

#### Training Services

- **Employers would support the opportunity to build bench strength gradually** and train strategically for what they need in the long run. In contrast, employers now feel they must train very quickly to get new employees up and running as soon as possible. Employers would value more **flexible funding and cost-sharing for training programs** to enable them to be more strategic with their training.
- **Incumbent worker training** is important to employers because they prefer to promote workers from within. This is especially true in rural areas where job choice or the labor pool is more limited. Supervisory training is probably the biggest shared need among businesses. Timely and targeted OJT and apprenticeships are needed with relevant and credible testing to assure skill mastery.
- **Employers want the opportunity to work with local high schools and community colleges on vocational education**. Since not all who graduate high school are bound for four year degrees, and academic degrees do not always translate to ability on the job. There are increasing opportunities for the high schools and community colleges to contribute to the vocational education needs of the local businesses. Some jobs in mill environments have specialized skills that require OJT and apprenticeships.

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

- **Employers value early exposure to local careers**. “**Better Together**,” was given as an example of school-to-work opportunities available for students in their junior and senior years. It is available in Central Oregon and has met with some success. This may be a program to emulate.

#### Assistance with talent acquisition

- Employers would like to see **WorkSource assist with active job fulfillment** not just by posting jobs, but by knowing each company, coming on site, understanding their “fit” so referrals work better for

employer and applicant. Having WorkSource help write job descriptions, help employers market themselves.

- Employers, especially those with limited or no HR staff, value services that can help them with **workforce and succession planning**. It was suggested that WorkSource train a person in each region to provide this type of service for small businesses.
- Employers value **robust screening services that not only validate basic skills, but also the credentials and base skills required for local industries** (e.g. reading a tape measure).
- Employers have appreciated **the Jobs Plus program** as successful in developing a qualified applicant pool. They would value having a higher percentage of candidates who are able to pass the drug screen.

Collaboration with WorkSource Partners

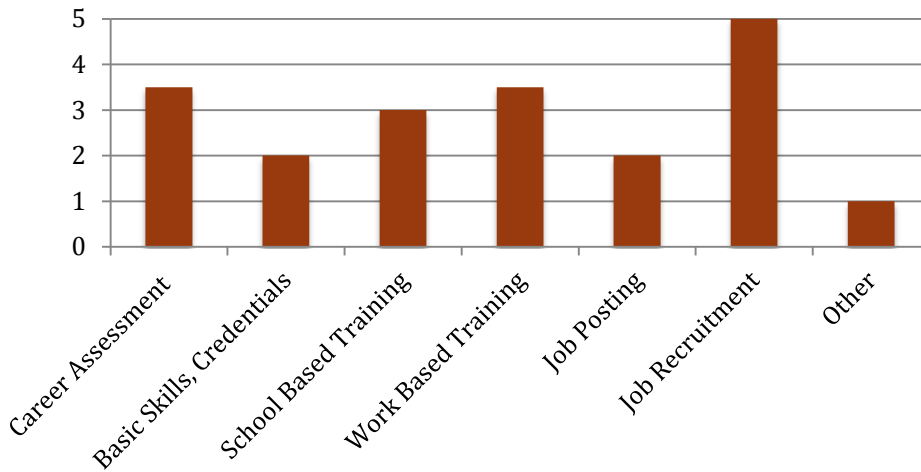
- Employers would like to see more effort to help **high school students get summer or seasonal work experience**.

**Desired Allocation of Resources**

We asked employers to allocate where they would like to see WorkSource resources allocated by key 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 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. The following is a summary in order of importance what they hoped to see in the future.

**Desired allocation of Worksource resources by Central Oregon 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.

In Central and South Central Oregon, employers want to ensure adequate resources were allocated toward **job recruitment**. They envisioned this as receiving clear and comprehensive information about all the services and incentives available to employers, and would include”

- Expanding **customized recruitment**.
- Helping to identify **what skills credentials and levels of NCRC is aligned with a business’ need**.
- Proactively working with **industry sectors to identify base skills** and then work with the job seeker functions to ensure career assessment and skills training programs are aligned with this information.
- Assisting **small business to develop HR plans**, writing job descriptions, etc.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Expand customized recruitment program to all parts of the region.
- WorkSource identify sector-based core skills and then provide targeted, purposeful training to job seekers to be qualified for the jobs that are available and needed by local businesses.
- Develop a cadre of expertise that can help small businesses develop HR strategies and help/train employers on effective recruitment, hiring and on-boarding processes.

Hand in hand with this vision of comprehensive job recruitment services was **additional work-based training**. Very similar to other regions, work based training focused on expanding **resources for OJT**, having pools of **funds for incumbent worker training**, and enabling **more apprenticeships**.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Allocate more resources for work-based training, and allowing a portion of funds to be used for incumbent or other critical training needs.
- More assistance o employers in helping them establish apprenticeships and working with BOLI on identifying and resolving requirements or restrictions that may be inhibiting the ability to use apprenticeships in high demand or critical skilled occupations.

**Career assessment and job readiness services** received strong support from employers. Businesses wanted to see **WorkSource and K-14 work closer together** on developing **information about local industries**, careers, and skills; getting this **information to students earlier in their education**, and ensuring that **job readiness skills were emphasized as much as technical skills**. Employers also wanted resources in this area to be allocated toward **youth work experience**.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Establish clear and up to date information about regional industry sectors, their career opportunities, and the skills and work environment associated with these occupations.
- Work with K-14, directly with students and with career counselors, to introduce and reinforce this information in schools; have employers speak to students, hold career fairs, etc.
- Expand resources for programs that provide youth work experience.

**School-based training** was focused primarily on enhancing **vocational education** with continued support for **customized workforce training** for skills upgrades like supervisory training offered by community colleges.

This suggest that WorkSource:

- Work collaboratively with K-12 and community colleges to expand vocational training and education.
- WorkSource staff work closer with community colleges to develop and **deliver more sector-specific or cohort training** for skills that have a common need across an industry sector. (employers noted a disconnect between the two partners)



While employers understood the importance of skills credentials such as the NCRC, they see these efforts as secondary concerns that would be better addressed once other priorities have been enhanced. They see limited in job postings, and thought this function was least important of all WorkSource services.

## 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

- **WorkSource is the premiere workforce center for job seekers and employers.**
- WorkSource is a place of "hope" for job seekers where employment can be a reality.
- We have an employment system that **works on behalf of all Oregonians**—those with barriers and without, as well as being an effective **stepping stone for youth** to gain experience in the workforce.
- **There is an effective, unified branding of the WorkSource system** so that all partners are known as "WorkSource" and that the marketing clearly welcomes all job seekers and employers.
- **There is better awareness and engagement by job seekers and employers** that will foster a higher level of meaningful interactions yielding relevant services.
- **The WorkSource system is flexible enough to provide funding for distinct local needs** that involve meaningful and innovative services.
- WorkSource maintains a **culture of investing in its people and infrastructure**.
- WorkSource connects job seekers at all income and experience levels to meaningful work with living wages and benefits.

#### Services to employers and industry groups

- **Employers can enter the system at any point and there is "no wrong door"** because the partners make the links to appropriate providers and customers have access to all services.
- **WorkSource is a system that is demand driven and "moves at the speed of business"** with the ability to adapt to the changing needs of regional employers.
- Employers can depend on WorkSource to have a **continuous pool of qualified and diverse candidates**.
- **WorkSource is a system that listens well and seeks to understand** the wide range of business needs in the region. In addition, WorkSource has the credibility and capability to support employers in understanding the new workforce with its generational challenges.

#### Services to job seekers and youth

- **Job Seekers can enter the system at any point. There is "no wrong door"** for job seekers, too, because WorkSource offers a seamless portal that will give job seekers access to all services.
- WorkSource is a system that **bridges the gap between youth and the workforce**.
- **Training, including one-on-one mentoring and coaching, is provided to job seekers and incumbent workers regardless of employment status** and delivered in ways that are easily available and attainable to job seekers and employers.

- **WorkSource has a strong connection to K-12 and community colleges** with courses, classes, internships, and job-related experiences that continually develop students to be job ready.
- **WorkSource partners have the capability to facilitate basic and foundational skills training** including the soft skills needed to be successful in gaining and retaining employment.
- WorkSource is a system that **consistently implements job seeker readiness programs** in a way that produces successful applicant referrals and meets employer expectations for qualified talent.

#### Partnerships and systems integration

- The WorkSource system allows for **expertise, information and data to be completely shared with all providers and partners** who are serving customers.
- There is a **fully integrated, organizational structure** where all providers and partners are aware of the full range of services provided across the system. This entails excellent networking and coordination of expertise and knowledge among agencies and staff.
- There is a **unified system for all WorkSource partners with shared technology** that provides simplified, intuitive entry, fast tracking, shared data and less duplication. This **user friendly data system** rapidly identifies and responds to employer and jobseeker needs.
- **All partners reside “under one virtual roof” and see themselves as one system** through a single lens with the ability to assess needs and make effective and timely referrals to relevant partners as needed.
- **All WorkSource partners and providers commit to a single goal and vision:** to help businesses and citizens to thrive in our region. This will require a continual conversation among K-12, community colleges and all partners.
- **There is strong collaboration with economic development and industry professionals** to link employer needs strategically to services.

### What’s working?

#### Overall

- **Customized recruitment** that sends well-qualified candidates to employers in a timely manner.
- **Co-location and close proximity** of some providers and partners who effectively collaborate and maintain a successful customer focus.
- An expressed feeling among WorkSource **staff that we are “open for partnerships.”**

#### Services to employers and industry groups

- **OJT programs** such as the “Hope” Grant and other community college collaborations for training have received positive response from employers.
  - Some **new job creation** has resulted with increased relationships with job seekers and businesses
  - Cost effective way to **address the skill gap issue** for employers and job seekers
  - This is a part of the system that is **user-friendly and non-bureaucratic** for the customers
- **Customized recruitment** and on-site visits to businesses are working very well. Employers are pleased that their voices are heard, that WorkSource understands their definition of “fit” and they receive quality referrals in a timely manner. This has enhanced the staff relationships with employers.
- Having a **job-ready pool of applicants** is helping to identify needs for provider relevant job readiness prep and coaching.
- There are **very positive relationships with the economic development** professionals, WorkSource staff and regional employers.

#### Services to job seekers and youth

- **Credentials such as NCRC are working well** in this region. Completing training and achieving credentials increase self-esteem among job seekers, and the employers see the programs as valuable.

- **OJT is effective in helping workers advance into higher level or different jobs** and supporting employers to train new employees.
- **One-to-one interview prep has been effective** with job seekers in helping them learn how to present themselves.
- There is a **strong connection** between the WorkSource welcome team that assesses job seeker readiness and the employer services team resulting in knowledgeable and timely referrals creating a win-win for job seekers and employers.

#### Partnerships and systems integration

- Where OED and WIA have co-located offices there has been **effective collaboration and referrals among staff** to support customer needs for services and programs.
- The collaboration between WorkSource partners, school districts and community college career centers on implementing **small scale innovative programs** is working well. Some examples of the partnerships with WorkSource include DHS (Central Oregon Partnership) and the St. Charles model.
- The teen-parent program piloted with DHS has shown early signs of success.

### What do we need to do differently or innovate?

#### Overall

- **Increase the pool of job seekers** to reach outside the population of those applying for unemployment insurance (UI) and ensure that services are appropriate for job seekers at varying experience and skill levels.

#### Enhanced services to employers and industry groups

- Establish a **systematic employer relationship strategy** so that programs are truly responsive to business needs and provide a one-stop-shop approach.
- Have multiple partner organizations **jointly visit employer sites** to increase timeliness and efficiency as well as decrease duplication.
- Develop a method to be able to **verify skills and credentials** that job seekers say they have.
- Enhance resources and **job readiness programs that keep-up with basic expectations for technology skills**. This would involve screening for proficient use of certain computer software and mobile devices as relevant qualifications for many positions.
- **Review and consider policy changes** to ease Bureau of Labor and Industry (BOLI) restrictions on certain high school vocational programs and OJT programs.
- **Increase the scale of the successful customized recruitment program** and continue to maintain its high quality and effectiveness.

#### Enhanced services to job seekers and youth

- **Provide training and basic skill development that aligns with the needs of job seekers and employers**. Assure that training, job prep coaching and mentoring is based on employer requirements and helps to fill skill gaps in the region. Client surveys should be done to continually analyze needs and keep current on trends; survey results should be shared with all WorkSource partners.
- Increase the funding and flexibility in developing and implementing various types of **work-based training** to support the needs of the **recently out-of-school, under-employed, and incumbent worker populations**. **Enhance job preparation services to emphasize** how job seekers present themselves to employers, how they market their NCRC and how to be successful in the workplace to sustain their employment once on the job.
- **WorkSource to collaborate closely with K-12 to develop more opportunities for youth** to gain work experience, job readiness skills and understand at a younger age the careers and career pathways that exist for them.

- **Increase marketing efforts aimed at enhancing job seeker awareness about WorkSource programs and services**, and particularly about sector-based opportunities in their regions. This can be achieved through a strategic process that includes job fairs, internships, summer and temporary work for youth and adults.
- **Develop a multi-tiered triage (assessment) system that is based on job seeker needs**—not a “process.” Assess those who are job ready and make appropriate referrals; identify those who are not job ready and provide the targeted support they need, follow their progress and path to job ready status.
- **Provide mentoring for high risk placements.**

Enhanced partnerships and systems integration

- **Identify all providers and partners, share the directory system-wide and increase all partners’ awareness about the full range of services available throughout WorkSource.** Continually share and update this information in way that becomes institutionalized and sustained as a system and culture. Co-location may help in facilitating and optimizing this level of system-wide collaboration.
- **Provide appropriate training for WorkSource staff to maximize their effectiveness** and ability to work in a collaborative and integrated system
- **Develop a common data base and shared records system with case notes** and assessments. This can be a cloud-based system that is user friendly and in keeping with current technologies.
- **Improve the iMatchSkills computer system or develop a completely new system** that ensures a shorter and user friendly process, reduces duplication of other data systems, connects to referral points and relevant partners for the information they need.
- **Enhance the collaboration with community colleges** to ensure training services effectively meet current employer needs.
- Need to **increase outreach and rebuild relationships** with WorkSource providers and partners in Crook and Jefferson counties.
- **Work more collaboratively with community partners such as Good Will Industries** that offer complementary services and assistance.

## 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 Central Oregon was to achieve their vision?*

**Creating a culture of working together.** Having a system of co-location and sharing of expertise across agencies and offices within the region, so we can eliminate the duplication of services and leverage resources to better service customers.

**Having the data systems to support a collaborative culture:** information and data need to be completely shared across partner agencies resulting in all partners operating as one virtual organization. Developing a single data base with shared records for use by all WorkSource partners that can become a premiere job board for connecting employers with job seekers in a simple and user friendly manner.

**Providing resources and funding that can quickly respond to changing regional economic needs and employer job trends.** This means additional resources for new and incumbent worker training, as well as more staff allocated to direct value-added activities such as customized recruitment.

**Establishing a “no wrong door” welcome system** into WorkSource so that job seekers and employers see and have access to all services. In other words creating a seamless portal for all customers. This requires that we have a better sense of what each partner contributes, and have information for customers that reflect the broad offering of services. It also requires a better assessment tools and initial triage processes that allows for more flexibility based on a jobs seekers needs and education/skill level.

**Enabling a coordinated effort between WorkSource and K-12** to develop and maintain effective programs help youth to understand local career opportunities, understand job readiness skills and get early work experience.

# EASTERN OREGON FORUM

## La Grande

April 9, 2014

*On April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014, approximately 97 employers, business groups and service providers gathered in La Grande to discuss workforce issues in the Eastern Oregon 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 Eastern Oregon 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

- **Companies are leaner** and the recession forced downsizing and greater automation. The remaining jobs have changed, requiring a mix of different skills and/or higher technical capability.
- The way to **recruit younger workers is changing** and a greater on-line presence and use of social media is needed. How employers word job postings and feature their workplace is more important. Some employers expressed needing help with this transition to more creative and targeted marketing of their organizations.
- **There is a population drain** in parts of the region causing a shrinking labor pool with fewer workers from which to choose and many with poor basic skills. Seasonal workers are particularly hard to find.
- **Younger job applicants lack basic mechanical knowledge.** This lack of trade-related knowledge and skills extends from the youth populations through approximately age 35. This stems from a decrease in the vocational education programs in schools.
- **Local area workers don't have the same technology experience with phones, computers, tablets, etc. as workers from metro areas.** The lack of broadband service in rural areas may contribute to this skill deficit.
- Need to **hire professional, mid-management and technical positions from outside of the region.** Often trailing spouses and partners accompany the higher skilled workers creating a retention challenge. Many of the recruited candidates have shorter work service tenures than the longer commitment that employers prefer.
- **Basic skills seem to be lacking** even in professional candidates. There seems to be less job readiness in the areas of written, inter-personal, verbal communication skills. In addition, employers find the new workforce lacks fundamental business sense and financial knowledge.
- Manufacturers experiencing large numbers of retirements among their trade and higher skilled workers, and have a **significant skill gap between the entry-level level trainees they are hiring and the retirees who have left.** They believe this is caused in part by not being able to hire during the recession.
- A lack of qualified workers tend to force regional employers to **"steal" higher skilled workers from one another**—a practice they would rather not do.

##### Trends in training and retaining workers

- Employer report **generational differences in work-ethic and work styles**, causing friction between generations. In addition, there seems to be a sense of entitlement among the younger workforce. Employers recognized the need to understand the differences and find ways for the generations to meet in the middle.
- Businesses are using **temp to hire** via staffing agencies to assess basic skills, work ethic, attitude and organizational “fit” of potential employees. Once past this probation period, employers are willing to invest in training.
- **Employers want more apprenticeship programs** and have to overcome challenges in making these programs effective. Since the leaning down of organizations during the recession, there are fewer skilled journeymen to supervise apprentices. Paying journeymen to supervise as well as perform their regular work creates a sustained overtime situation that is unaffordable. Contracting out apprenticeships is more expensive.
- **Rural wages are not keeping up with the cost of housing**
- Employers report having to spend increasingly more **time learning and updating federal and state regulations rather than job skills training** .
- Employers find it difficult to recruit workers for temporary assignments during seasonal lay-offs because workers would jeopardize their unemployment benefits.

### 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

- Employers highly value state support for **on-the-job and incumbent worker training** that helps get new employees up to speed quickly and helps move existing workers up within the organization to meet expansion needs or replace workers that have left.
- With a large number of jobs in agriculture, manufacturing, and the trades, **vocational educations and trade programs** are of particular value, such as the successful example taking place at Perry Tech in Yakima.
- **Employers value short-term, high demand training** that can aggregate need of employers so they do not have to send employees out of region. This includes supervisory and team leadership, or specialized sector skills. .
- **Businesses want better access to post-secondary training especially for Union and Wallowa counties** where employers can partner with schools for relevant adult training programs.

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

- Employers value **career planning and assessment that is tied to local industry**, so the information shared with job seekers and the skills that are screened for have direct connection to local jobs. Businesses want a **stronger connection between employers and schools** to foster a real understanding of workforce needs so that the education system is consistently promoting regional careers to their students.
- Employers value programs that help **youth find and participate in early work experiences** such as internships, mentoring programs, summer jobs, job shadowing, etc.
- Employers also appreciate the job preparation function provided to applicants that help them with resume, interviewing, and work readiness skills.

#### Assistance with Talent Acquisition



- Employers think highly of **WorkSource’s customized recruitment service** and job fulfillment functions where applicant **skills and credentials are verified** and employers are assured that job seekers have the skill set that they say they have.
- **Receiving support from WorkSource professionals with organizational succession planning** and proactive recruitment for anticipated turnover as employees are working for shorter service tenures. Having this delivered by a unified WorkSource team who understands the specific employer. Such teamwork will eliminate duplication and scattered services from various agencies.
- Employers value OED’s **labor market information** function and would like additional information on comparative salaries to aid employers in attracting and retaining employees.

Collaboration with WorkSource Partners

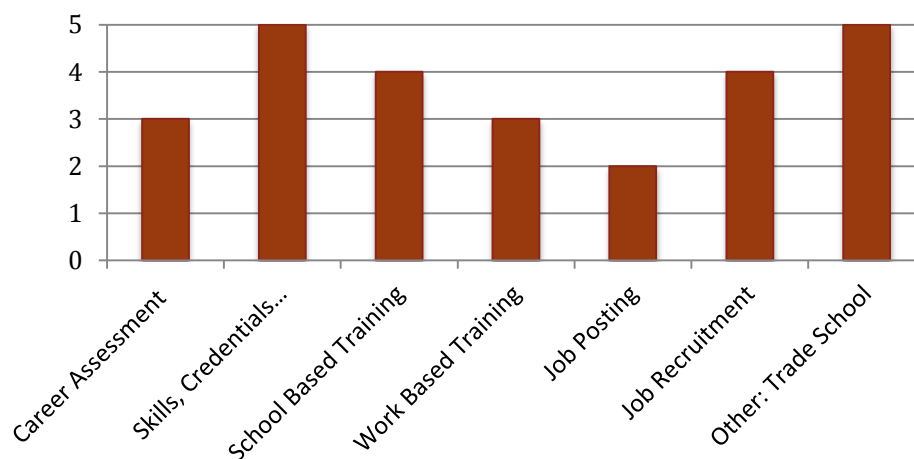
- Employers would like **WorkSource branded and marketed as more than just a job-placement service**—where there is a user-friendly list of all services that is easy to find and navigate.
- With large geographic distances between resources, employers need **easier access to services**. They would like to see more **“traveling” staff**—specialists that are shared among partners and rotated to various offices throughout the region.

**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 Eastern Oregon 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.*

For Eastern Oregon, employers were fairly consistent across industries and business size in terms of how they valued various WorkSource services and where they wanted workforce related funds allocated in their region.

**Basic skills training and credential** had the highest allocation rating of core services. Report back from employers indicate that they wanted **youth to have more opportunities to build basic job readiness skills** through summer and seasonal work experience, more internships and job shadows and more engagement by employers in helping students and career counselors understand the local job market. In addition, they wanted to see more basic skills training that include **customer service and business office basics**.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- More resources allocated to youth work experience that goes beyond barrier populations or youth at risk.
- Basic skills courses that include customer service
- Boot camp-type course that is applied learning for basic business skills/software common to employers.

Also receiving high marks was the desire to **establish a trade school**. Manufacturing and construction trades represent a significant number of jobs, and multiple tables agreed that younger workers, not just youth, had far fewer mechanical, applied math (reading a tape measure) and overall problem-solving skills that come from vocational education. There was much conversation that vocational skills are also needed for those going on to college in technical fields, so the value of a trade school went beyond middle-skill jobs.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Have the local workforce investment board be active in efforts to establish a trade school
- WorkSource career assessment staff understand the needs of local trades and manufacturing and work with K-12 to ensure their career counselors have the same information.
- The state workforce board, BOLI and OED be advocates for vocational education.

**Job recruitment and customized screening** received the third highest rating. Employers of all sizes and industry sectors noted the importance of screening good candidates and helping those candidates **understand the work environment** of different employers leading to more successful hires and less turnover.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Expand customized recruitment from a pilot and institute it throughout the region.
- Information about needed skills and work environments are aggregated and analyzed by region so patterns for skills sets can be identified and basic skills training can be developed in a more proactive fashion.

**School-based training** also received a significant amount of the allocated money. The conversation around this two core themes: the need to aggregate for common **incumbent skill training such as supervisory courses**, and **more sector-based training and funds for critical industry** shortages (e.g. commercial truck drivers) in both high school and community colleges.

This suggests that WorkSource

- Allocate funds for key incumbent worker skill training, especially for skills that prevent businesses from growing or being competitive.

- Have emergency training funds for critical occupational shortages that are impacting employer growth or competitiveness.
- More actively engage K-12 in sector based workforce strategies.

Employers also wanted to see additional resources for **work-based training**. Two issues dominate this conversation. One was being able to apply work-based training to **under and employed people that are trying to “skill-up”** in their jobs. The other was finding a creative solution to **overcome the bottleneck in apprenticeship** programs, specifically the lack of journeymen available to supervise apprenticeship.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Revise restrictions on how work-based training can be used and allocate additional resources toward work-based training programs.
- Have discussions with BOLI to see if a temporary waiver or similar adjustments can be made to journeyman/apprentice ratio so get additional apprenticeships through the pipeline.

## 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

- Everybody wins--employers, workers and WorkSource because **there is a positive and clear mission** where partners **invest in a common outcome** and provide unified services to customers that are easy to access and navigate.
- WorkSource is an **employer driven model that understands the current and future needs of local industries** and builds services around those needs.
- The **system serves all job seekers**, not only the unemployed or entry level applicants.
- **We are "not your grandmother's workforce system"** because we have a brand and image of serving all types of workers and being responsive to employers.
- A more **proactive WorkSource that is better integrated with economic development** efforts in the region.
- **Services are seamless to customers.** There is no wrong door because staff is cross-trained and partners do not have turf issues. **Services have clear outcomes but have flexibility to address changing needs**, especially able to adjust during recessionary times versus periods of job growth.

#### Services employers, job seekers and youth

- **There are training services for various skill levels** that build upon one another and will assist job seekers in meeting position qualifications required by local employers. Workers can receive the **training they need regardless of employment status.**
- **There are services that help under-employed and employed job seekers** who want to develop higher skill and knowledge levels in order to increase their earning potential and prevent future unemployment.
- **We have a customized and user-friendly welcome process** that quickly identifies individualized services leading to greater customer accountability and success.
- **There are more services for professional and non-entry level workers** that make it easier for them to expand skills and connect to employers.
- **There are adequate resources for youth to gain work experience** that extends beyond at-risk-youth and includes more than summer programs.

#### Integration and Coordination among WorkSource Partners

- **WorkSource is truly a "WE & OURS" system** where:
  - Partners have a high level of understanding of what each organization brings to the table and can effectively co-market services as a group.

- Information is shared among partners in a way that can follow a customer and reduces duplication.
- There are resources to train staff and performance measures are tied to collaboration
- **WorkSource partners with local media on a cohesive marketing strategy** to raise awareness of services.
- **There is a coordinated effort among WorkSource partners to share information** internally in a way that maximizes opportunities for individuals seeking employment and training.
- **Schools and WorkSource partners have a coordinated career planning and job preparation strategy** that aligns with local career opportunities. Present and future workforce needs should drive vocational education and training programs.

## What's working?

### Overall

- **There is positive interaction and cooperation already existing among partners** to deliver workforce services to job seekers. We currently play well with others.
- **There are strong Oregon Employer Council chapters in Eastern Oregon** who are engaged with businesses in the region
- We have the support and **opportunity to pilot ideas and have been creative with our limited and dispersed resources.**
- WorkSource has been **successful in filling retail jobs** that do not require specialized skill.
- **WorkSource helps with applicant screening**, especially with small businesses that operate without distinct HR functions.

### Services to Business and Industry Groups

- **Customized and exclusive recruitment services** with face-to-face and onsite interaction with employers. This type of recruitment has been successful in providing qualified applicants due to the deeper and specific knowledge of employer needs.
- **Services for small businesses** through the Small Business Development Center are well received and utilized.
- **On-the-job (OJT) through Title 1B** has been successful with some employers.
- **The work-based training program called ASPIRE has been implemented in Pendleton and Hermiston.** It is a good example of an effective on-site program that has been well-received by employers.

### Services to Job Seekers and Youth

- **Orientation process where staff spends one-to-one time with new customers** is resulting in better referrals.
- There is **an increase in the number of job seekers completing their NCRC.** More employers recognize its value and it seems to be gaining momentum in Eastern Oregon.
- **Basic skills training and job search coaching** with interview tips and resume building tools are enhancing job seeker qualifications and presentation abilities. In addition, the CTUIR job club is a good example of career planning and job preparation program that is working.
- **Microsoft IT Academy has helped build computer skills among job seekers** assisting with their technology competency and aiding in their job readiness.
- **There has been some progress in developing and offering** entrepreneurial and business-related classes in schools at the K-12 level to broaden awareness and prepare young students for their future career paths.

### Collaboration among WorkSource Partners

- **Collaboration between WorkSource and community college career centers is occurring** to produce targeted training for employers.
- Some promising collaboration is occurring with WorkSource and Title I-B programs preparing youth for academic and employment success.

## Where can we do things differently or innovate?

### Overall

- **Develop a shared vision among partners** and establish short and long-term goals that will institutionalize and incent strong and sustained collaboration.
- **Have more flexibility to help those who are under-employed or employed in lower wage jobs and looking to move up.** There are disproportionate resources spent on a small percent of job seekers who are chronically unemployed. The system must do more for other WorkSource customers through coaching, training and other targeted services.
- **Pilot an online chat format for specific job seeker and employer services** to test alternate ways to communicate with customers.

### Enhanced Services to Employers and Industry Groups

- Have **work-based training options for incumbent workers** that fill urgent gaps such as millwrights.
- **Develop employer training and assistance for inter-generational workplaces** including sharing best practices, coaching and information about no-cost benefits that can help retain employees.
- **Work to modify the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) work rules** that restrict young workers and students from participating in certain apprenticeship programs.
- **Develop training for small businesses to assist with recruitment and hiring processes** such as writing job descriptions, establishing minimum qualifications, best interview techniques and onboarding new employees.
- **Have a deliberate strategy to integrate WorkSource and economic development efforts in the region.** WorkSource should host annual strategy sessions and/or other types of forums with economic development organizations to understand their direction and the links to regional workforce plans.
- Provide a short class such as “Office Management Basics Boot Camp” that prepared job seekers for entry-level office jobs.

### Enhanced Services to Job Seekers and Youth

- **Develop a tiered triage process** to provide staff assistance and coaching for job seekers with greater needs and facilitating self-service for those who are job ready.
- Create more opportunities for **youth to have early work experiences** through summer, seasonal jobs, short projects, job shadowing, internships, etc.
- **Have a traveling road show** (the book mobile model) that can reach customers **in underserved areas.** The traveling team can provide initial welcoming services, skills assessment, career planning, job preparation, and other services.
- **Increase the pool of qualified workers through proactive training for basic and base skills required by local employers.** Such training may include customer service and/or applied computer skills typically used in most jobs today.
- **Provide a region-wide coordinated effort with schools to expose youth to the trades** and help career counselors understand the local opportunities for students wanting a vocational education. In addition, high schools can incorporate more job and workplace readiness skills training into the classroom. Perhaps have a pilot program that uses the National Career Readiness Certification (NCRC) program to connect high school curriculum to youth employment.

- **Ensure that job readiness classes are available for those who want them** as these are the job seekers most likely to follow- through on job referrals. Often the classes are filled by those required to attend regardless of how motivated or engaged they may be in the learning.
- **Ensure that all basic programs are accessible in each region.** For example Region 13 has no GED program.

Enhanced Integration and Coordination among Providers and Partners

- **Facilitate full awareness among all partners of the combined portfolio of WorkSource services.** One suggestion is to coordinate an annual “passport” event where all agencies represent their services in an exhibition hall setting and partners circulate and engage with one another getting their “passport” stamped by contacts with whom they are most likely to interface.
- **Identify people within agencies with specialized expertise or knowledge** and let them rotate to various offices where their expertise is needed. They can help train others as well as provide direct services to customers.
- **Create a shared data base** among partners that identifies all the regional and state training resources.
- **Develop a strong marketing strategy and brand for WorkSource** that moves beyond the perception that it exclusively serves the unemployed or low skilled workers. Then execute the marketing consistently and collaboratively throughout the system.
- **Modify iMatchSkills** to include a shorter initial process, modules that are more customized for job seekers with different levels of experience and education and a data base search engine for job matching and identifying relevant programs for job seekers. Once modifications are made, **rebrand the tool.**

### 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 eastern Oregon region was to achieve their vision?*

**Work from a customer perspective.** Truly having a customer driven model with employers defining local needs, and shared metrics that are based on customer expectations.

**Develop a brand that overcomes the perception of an “unemployment department.”** We need to get the word out that we do more than help those who are unemployed, that WorkSource is a full employment and training system. We also need to be more cohesive in the manner in which we market our services- having materials about all services provided by WorkSource partners, not just those of individual agencies.

**Act as “We & Ours”** with a positive, clear and shared vision of services. This will require that as partners, we are aware of each other’s services and provide the training for staff to understand the breadth of the system. This will require **inter-organizational collaboration** with networking mechanisms, information-sharing systems, ongoing communications and accountability through common measurable goals.

**Have the resources and flexibility to assist all workers regardless of employment status.** WorkSource is a comprehensive system that not only helps put people to work, but with the strength of all partners and the alignment with regional economic development efforts can also prevent unemployment and build stronger local companies.

**Develop closer collaboration with schools** to help youth understand local career opportunities, gain overall job readiness skills and provide more opportunities for **youth work experience.**

# The Future of WorkSource

## Rural Employer Focus Groups

The Future of WorkSource is a joint project of the Oregon Employment Department and local Workforce Investment Boards 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 to be more responsive, and how state and local providers can work more collaboratively to provide integrated and seamless services to employers and job seekers.

In addition to eight larger forums where both employers and providers gathered (Eugene, Florence, La Grande, Medford, Redmond, Seaside, Salem, and Wilsonville), the project held four additional employer focus groups in rural parts of the state to ensure input from a wide array of industries and regions. This report reflects what we heard from employers at the four employer forums.

- April 10<sup>th</sup> 32 employers and business group representatives gathered in Ontario
- April 15<sup>th</sup> 46 employers and business group representatives gathered in Klamath Falls
- May 8<sup>th</sup> 11 employers and business group representatives gathered in Hermiston
- May 9<sup>th</sup> 15 employers and business group representatives gathered in The Dalles

### Employer Workforce Trends

*We asked employers what trends affect how they find, train and retain employees. What challenges they faced in their part of Oregon and how those challenges affected their business.*

#### Hermiston Region

##### Trends in finding qualified workers

- **Increased reliance on certification** of existing employees. For example, the closest HVAC certification program is in Seattle. This necessitates several days away from work to complete training.
- There is a trend towards **more skilled type of labor using apprenticeships** and journeyman programs.
- There is a challenge with **seasonal work** where some employees are on the job for 6 months and then off for the next 6 months. It is difficult for them to **keep their mastery** of some skills when the talent lies dormant for half the year.
- Some have tried to **train for the “next level” in the off months** for seasonal workers so that there is no time lost on the job during the productive months. This allows for increased bench strength when production resumes later in the year.
- The local Chamber is working with Blue Mountain Community College to **bring more training closer in proximity** to the actual need so that lengthy commutes are not required.
- There is a continuing challenge with **workers who reside in Washington** but are employed in Oregon. Housing and benefits are not easy when dealing with the two states differing requirements in assistance programs.
- Several businesses said they are looking to **enhance the diversity of employees**; they feel a more diverse pool of applicants is highly desirable.



### Trends in training and retaining workers

- There is a need for a more **intuitive approach to matching skills and available** jobs or seeing beyond the job descriptions. For example, if there is a similar job that is close in skills required, is there a way to source an applicant who possesses most of the qualities needed for similar jobs.
- By utilizing temp agencies some non-workplace related issues are handled such as **transportation or housing concerns**. These agencies will deliver the staff to agricultural producers and arrange for housing for them if it is needed. Business cannot afford to assist in those areas.
- Some operations are using what they refer to as **“reality training”** where a prospective employee is put into a real life work situation for a part of the day. This allows the applicant to see what the work is really like to determine if it is a good match for both parties.
- Due to the seasonality of many positions in the Hermiston / Boardman area, there is an accompanying **feast or famine style of competition between employers for the same limited pool of employees**. This is particularly difficult in agriculture, which is not required to pay overtime.
- The nature of the **shift work** in some industries makes it challenging for an employee who is trying to maximize their earning potential by way of a second job.
- **Additional training of existing employees** has worked at the hospital in Boardman to try and retain skilled nursing. This was a part of a federal program that while the funding is no longer in place, is still a model that works.

## **Klamath Falls Region**

### Trends in finding qualified workers

- Employers noted a **lack of applied, mechanical and technological skills** in schools, which makes it difficult to find qualified workers for jobs above entry level.
- There was a perception that some job seekers are unwilling to do entry-level work. **Employers are training for “work ethic” as well as job related skills** and functions.
- Some employers are using, or reverting to, **paper applications as a way to check job seekers’ writing abilities**.
- Employers view **young workers’ expectation of salaries, positions and advancement as unrealistic**. There is a greater concern among younger workers with work-life balance than in years past.
- **Management positions are difficult to fill** for a variety of reasons including trailing spouses, rural location, and limited transfer or promotion opportunities. As a result, employers are trying to grow from within.
- Employers are using **more temporary workers as a way to screen for job specific skills, motivation, reliability and fit**. This practice shifts the burden of unemployment and other costs from the employer to the staffing agencies that pays wages and taxes
- The **inability of many job seekers to pass a drug test** and/or a criminal records checks is a significant problem.
- Employers displayed a strong **perception that state and federal support programs create a disincentive to work**.
- Employers believe that their region wants to create **opportunities for youth employment**, but the demands of school, sports and other activities significantly limits their availability to work.

- Currently high schools focus on **preparing students for college over preparing them for the workplace**. Education, however, does not necessarily lead to a well-paying job.

Trends in training and retaining workers

- **Generational differences** in performance and expectations in the workplace **require new skills of managers**.
- **People are changing jobs more frequently**, often after two years or less. The challenge heard from employers was they often invest in training only to have the person move to a competitor.
- As employees, especially youth, gain more skills and training, they often **leave for opportunities available in larger cities**.

## Ontario Region

Trends in finding qualified workers

- A **lack of emphasis on trades and technical education** has resulted in a shortage of vocational and mechanical skills; significant gap in technical skills and insufficient capacity to train machinists and related occupations.
  - Programs like **Poverty to Prosperity** does provide needed technical training
- **The shortage of skilled workers means employers often wind up stealing from one another** which they acknowledge hurts the overall competitiveness of regional businesses.
- **The middle-skill worker group is shrinking**. There are more high and low skill jobs, especially in healthcare.
- **Low high school graduation rates** are hurting the skill level of entry-level workers and the opportunities for youth. Poor home settings reinforce the low emphasis on work or education.
- **Older displaced workers** are hard to hire because they have either limited or specialized skills from being employed with the same employer or position for many years. These employees find they **need to retool their skills to get rehired**.
- It is often **hard to attract and train professional positions**.
- **Technology has changed the way recruiting is done**. More employers use social media as a complement rather than a replacement to traditional recruiting methods. Older workers are not as adept in marketing themselves online. There is a difference in how to recruit and retain workers under 40 and workers over 40.
- **Younger workers expectation** of salaries, positions and advancement **seems unrealistic**.
- **Young people move away to go to college or join the military and don't return**; there is no coordinated community effort to attract these people back to the region.

Trends in training and retaining workers

- **Seasonal jobs** in construction, food processing, hospitality **make it difficult to retain good employees and for workers to make a consistent income**
- **Unemployment requirements are not well suited for regions or workers whose primary income is seasonal**.
- There is a growing **emphasis on Lean process** to stay competitive. This results in fewer middle level skilled workers who must be specialized to stay. Then there is a shortage when they leave or retire
- It is hard to retain employees, especially for businesses with little or no benefits or smaller businesses with limited growth opportunities.

- Transportation and housing needs for a range of workers;
  - There is **little housing stock for professional level recruits**.
  - **Distance** between home and work **can be a barrier** especially at lower wage jobs.

#### Other Issues

- Cultural values prioritize going to work rather than going to college. Those who complete a degree most often leave the area for better jobs. It was noted however that **education does not necessarily lead to well-paying jobs**.
- Border towns like Ontario have **multi-state regulatory issues** to deal with.
  - Large number of employees or community college students live in Idaho.
  - Difference in each states minimum wage creates conflict.
  - **No reciprocity with Idaho for medical licenses**; this has helped to create a shortage of nurses and other medical skills.
  - **Unemployment and assistance is more liberal in Oregon than Idaho**, and therefore attracts more people for services.

## The Dalles

#### Trends in finding qualified workers

- The employers have noticed **increased interest in relocating** to The Gorge as more jobseekers desire a healthier **work-life balance**.
- There is greater demand **for bilingual middle and upper management**.
- Concern was expressed regarding **regulatory restrictions for youth**. Most companies present said they were avoiding hiring anyone under 16 age as it is perceived the rules are too restrictive.
- Businesses have increased the use of **Realistic Job Previews** to help lower turnover in the first 90 days.
- The local hospital **is not interested in using temp to hire** as the cost is too great to the business for professionals with higher salaries.
- Due to the seasonality of the **Recreation Industry**, a **synergy has evolved between** the winter jobs on **Mt Hood** and the summer employment opportunities in **The Gorge**.
- There was considerable conversation from the employers about **K-12 Education**, its quality, the “increased focus” on college bound curriculum and the low level of skill attained at graduation.
  - Employers note workers are **concerned about the quality of the education** their children will receive should they choose to **relocate** their families to The Gorge.
- A lack of basic skills (math, English, people and communication skills) was noted.

#### Trends in training and retaining workers

- There was a request for greater training of individuals to use computers, specifically **MS Office Suite**.
- Rent and property values are climbing in The Dalles and some employers note that their **employees cannot live near their jobs**. This in turn creates transportation issues which the employee must weigh when looking at employment.
- For dual career couples, it is more **challenging to find career track positions for both spouse** and prospective employee.
- With a noted increase in **people holding two or more part time positions**, **greater flexibility** is required of employers.

## 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?*

### Hermiston Region

- Employers see significant value in **training**. It was suggested that perhaps some **UI benefits dollars could go to pay for more work based training**.
- Employers believe there is great value in **career and technical (vocational) education** and want to see the region and state reinvest in this form of education.
- Employers value **apprenticeship training** and see it as a growing area of opportunity for fields such as millwrights, electricians, and other trades. .
- Employers value **earlier work readiness** and want to see **a closer connection in high school to business values** where quality of work, work ethic and the “cost of failure” is incorporated along side academics and skill development. **Boardman High School** was put forth as having a **highly successful program for career exploration**. Businesses also wanted more programs similar to Junior Achievement, which give real life experience to youth.
- Employers expressed the need for help from WorkSource sourcing **potential mid-level and management employees from outside** the area.
- There was a consensus in **perception that local WorkSource employees are restricted by their processes from working together**. The suggestion was to reach across the board and collaborate regardless of where the program or its funding originated.
- A strong desire **to re-tool the iMatch program** was mentioned. It was suggested that there are better online programs in existence that would be more adaptable to the differing needs of the users who touch the system.

### Klamath Falls Region

- **Employers highly value on the job training** as a way to bring employees up to speed as quickly as possible, and **incumbent worker training** as a way to promote from within and maintain a competitive workforce.
- Employers would like to see the **state’s 40-40-20 model include a focus on more career/technical education** at the secondary level so that young people can work and continue their education. This needs to be connected to career planning much earlier than the latter part of high school.
- Employers value the **customized recruitment** by WorkSource to screen and services to pre-qualify candidates and verify credentials based on specific employer needs. The staff knows the businesses well and what makes a job seeker a good “fit” for that employer.
- Along with customized recruitment, employers view it important to have **skills testing and verification** of a job seeker’s identified skills and abilities. This includes testing and proctoring services for a variety of credentials, including OSHA certification. There is also a need to help older workers update their technology skills.
- Employers value the complete set of workforce services offered and suggest **rebranding so WorkSource** is seen not just as a “crisis only” system for the unemployed, but a value added system for a larger market of employers and job seekers. Looking for a way to market to employers for skills improvement and credentialing, in addition to recruiting and hiring.

- Businesses recognize the importance of **youth services**. There is a strong desire for more programs and services for youth not just the highly talented and low skilled, but the vast majority in the middle. A “Turn-Your-Life-Around” approach that includes expunging records.
- **Employers highly value school-to-work type training:** New more focused, and specific training in technical/trades, pre-management skills, internships, apprenticeships, “soft skills” and how to adapt existing skills to new or different jobs and industries.
- Employers would like **more frequent and strategic** communications between WorkSource staff and employers, with quick follow up on requests and leads. All staff in the WS system need to be able to represent ALL programs available to employers, and keep them informed of new programs available to help them strengthen their businesses.
- Employers appreciate **Labor Market Analysis** and the assistance to local governments and industries with analyzing growth and viability of industries for future regional projects.

## Ontario Region

- Employers value and want to see **more career technical education:** vocational and trades programs linked to regional industry. **Having a trade school** in the region and delivering education in a way that includes workplace skills was one idea.
- Employers use and value **WorkSource’s customized recruitment:** Services that WorkSource provides to screen and qualify candidates should be based on individual employer needs; like the front door to the HR department, where WorkSource staff can take the time to know the business and what “fits”.
- There is a strong need for programs to **provide youth with job readiness skills as well as work experience**. Business people who can act as mentors for youth is highly valued such as student cohorts that partner with businesses or business groups to give students a reality check for workplace skills and help guide them to careers in the region.
- **There is a need for more ways to train and to match local industry needs.** Greater connection between workforce and local economic planning could involve:
  - Community planning to identify gaps and opportunities
  - WorkSource specialists available for different sectors
  - Technical training specialists
  - Easier ways to develop apprentice programs
- **Employers value assistance with incumbent worker training to train and promote from within, requiring more shared resources for work-based training** and better collaboration between WorkSource and the community college for supervisory and industry specific training.
- Employers would like to see WorkSource have **adequate resources to train for basic skills**, GED and other essential skills for entry-level jobs. (They are experiencing a demand for training that is greater than the supply.)
- **Help for employers to work across different cultures.** There is a growing Hispanic population, rarely engaged in these discussions.

## The Dalles Region

- Employers values **more resources allocated toward training**, both school-based and work-based training with more flexibility for training resources to be used for existing workers.
- Employers noted a strong desired to have **comprehensive basic skills training tied to regional industries**.

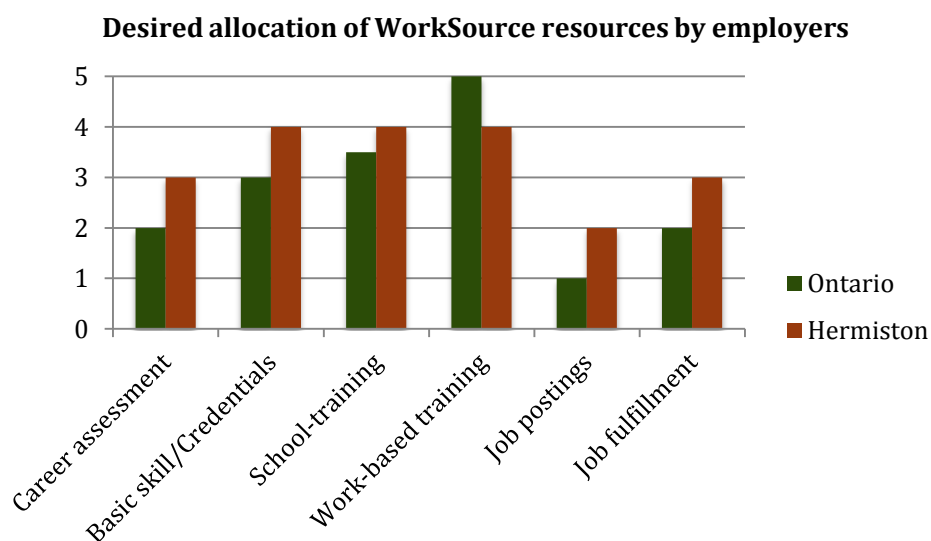
- Employers see the importance of businesses working with the schools to **expose students to the options** that exist in The Gorge. Businesses can be (and want to be) great partners working with schools, letting teachers know what **skills and traits** are valued and necessary in the workplace. Employers recognize that not all students are bound for college, and there need to be options for exposure to the technical careers and trades, especially at earlier ages. The program at the end of the senior year called **Extended Application** was put forth as an **example of a successful program** yet concern was expressed that it was late in the education cycle. It was suggested that exposure begin in middle school followed by reinforcement throughout the remainder the public school. **Dufur High** has begun a program that starts in the **freshman year** of high school to highlight options and get students thinking about potential careers.
- Business organizations (e.g. Chamber of Commerce) expressed their commitment to **job fairs both large annual and more frequent “mini fairs,”** presented during off hours (not 8-5) to attract those already employed who may be looking to change careers or add a second job.
- Business leaders would like to see a **consistent brand of WorkSource** along with increased outreach into the community. It was put forth that **WorkSource could create networking events** beyond jobs and training, where employers could get together to meet one another, exchange best practices and further build community.
- Business value customized recruitment and prescreening of referrals to **validate applicant’s self-reported abilities** especially in areas like business writing, basic computer competence (Office Suite), communication skills and interpersonal relationship skills.

## Desired Allocation of Resources

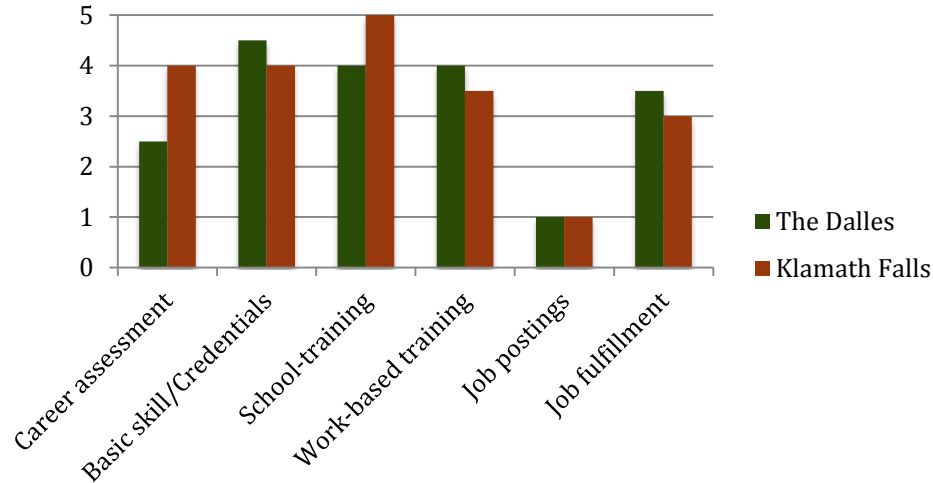
We asked employers to allocate where they would like to see WorkSource resources allocated by key functions of a) career planning and job preparation, b) basic skills training and credentials, c) work-based training for new or incumbent workers, d) school-based training, e) job postings, and f) active 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.

The following summarizes in order of importance what employers at these forums hope to see in the future.



### Desired allocation of WorkSource resources by employers



Throughout the Gorge, Eastern Oregon and South-Central Oregon, employers shared many concerns and wanted to see WorkSource focus staff and resources on similar issues. The overarching theme was strong basic education and training that taught both skills and work readiness and was aligned with regional industries. While employers noted the need for specific resources to assist their business or broader industry, there was also a sense of disconnect between their needs as employers looking for qualified workers and the education system producing the future pipeline of employees; that both industry specific needs and broader foundational aspects of workforce development needed to be addressed concurrently.. Specific suggestions included:

- Employers want to see additional resources allocated toward **school-based training that focuses on job readiness**, especially in the areas of:
  - Increased investment in **vocational education and career/technical training** in high schools and community colleges, exposing students much earlier in the education cycle.
  - **Job preparation and workforce expectations as a part of school curriculum** in K-12 and post-secondary.
  - **Customized training programs** that are better coordinated between the job screening functions of WorkSource and the customized training programs and community colleges.

Employers want to see this **education and training tied more closely with regional industry needs** to ensure the pipeline of new workers are better prepared for local jobs and have a shorter ramp-up time between the point of starting a job and becoming a productive contributor to the business. Over the long run, this would in turn reduce the amount of work-based training dollars spent by employers and WorkSource on basic skills and allow those funds to be focused on providing the workers continual training to remain a productive part of the workforce.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Be a strong advocate for reinvestment in career technical (vocational) education, and that local workforce investment boards use their convening role to identify sector specific needs that would be tied to career technical education.
- **Develop more information about local jobs and careers** and the workplace expectations of regional employers. Work with K-12 to expose students to local careers, helping educational institutions connect with employers and providing career counselors with up to date information on local industries and jobs.



- Connect job readiness and workplace expectation skills to education and training programs offered by community colleges so graduates of degree or non-degree programs have both the skills and the understanding required of the work environment.

**Work-based training** was also an area where more resources are needed. By having WorkSource cost-share specific training, employers believe that this will help employees be more productive and have a greater likelihood of succeeding in a job, help employers be more competitive, and help retain employees by promoting them from within. This means that training resources need to be flexible enough to cover incumbent as well as new workers, and that apprenticeships are easier to use.

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Allocate more resources toward work-based training programs and enhance the flexibility for funds to be used on critical skill gaps whether those are for new hires or incumbent workers.
- Work with BOLI to examine apprenticeship regulations that may be preventing employers from maximizing apprenticeships as a way to fill critical skill gaps (e.g. age requirements, journeymen ratios, etc.)

Many jobs in rural areas do not require a college degree, however, they do require **strong basic and applied skills** that are often accompanied by industry **credentials**. This was one area where all employer focus groups reported a shortage of skills and where businesses wanted more resources to be allocated:

This suggests that WorkSource:

- Enhance basic skill training to include not only math, communications, writing, etc., but basic computer, customer services, or applied business basics that are aligned with local industry needs.
- Helping employers have a better understanding of the national career readiness certificate (NCRC) and how different NCRC levels are applied to different jobs so employers know how to use NCRC in screening and hiring new employees.

Employers want to maintain and **expand customized job screening** and job fulfillment activities offered by WorkSource. This was especially important for smaller companies where workforce staff acted as an extended HR function. There was little support for general job postings. .

This suggests that WorkSource

- Expand customized recruitment services and develop industry specialists within the region that have in-depth knowledge of local needs.
- Enhance screening functions that verify skills and credentials that job seekers state in applications.

Other Implications for WorkSource

- In **Klamath Falls**, employers were concerned with the high numbers of applicants failing drug tests. They see this as a workforce issue whereby community programs to target drug use are coordinated with employment and wrap around services within WorkSource agencies and partners.
- In **The Dalles**, employers expressed an interest in WorkSource playing a more active role in hosting job fairs and convening employers to share best practices.
- In **Ontario**, employers wanted to see more assistance in working across different cultures, acknowledging the growth in Hispanic populations and the need to integrate them more into workforce development.
- In **Hermiston**, employers had a need for WorkSource to help them source or recruit employees from outside the region when they could not find qualified workers within the area.



## PART III: Job Seeker Survey Appendix

One of the objectives of the Future of WorkSource project was to understand how job seekers are interfacing with the system, and how their needs and perceptions align with those of employers and the actual delivery of WorkSource services. This is especially important since job seekers are customers who represent the supply side of the WorkSource system and their use of services comprise a majority of WorkSource resources. Prior to the employer forums held across the state, the project surveyed job seekers to:

- Understand the statewide and regional patterns of how they use the system,
- Identify where the system is meeting expectations and where there are areas for improvement, and
- Explore what users value about the range of services available to them, and where the system has limitations to serve their needs.

The survey, therefore, asked questions related to the initial perception of WorkSource, the services used, the satisfaction with services, the reason for not using certain services, what they liked best about their WorkSource experience, what they would like to see improved, and what they wanted in future services.

### Methodology

In February 2014, a survey was sent to over 5,700 Oregonians that used a WorkSource service in Fall 2013. There was a 15% response rate with 870 complete surveys representing all regions of the state. The statewide geographic and demographic composition of the responses was aligned with the overall use of the system with a few exceptions.

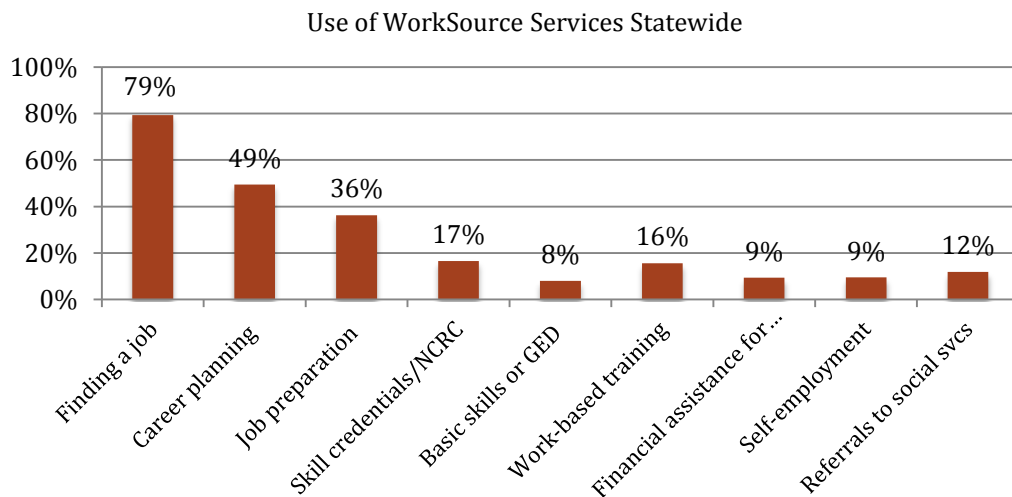
- The Portland tri-county area (Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties) accounted for 47.8% of respondents, similar to the population distribution of 44%.
- The average educational attainment was similar to the general population. Specifically, 39% of respondents reported a high school education or less, compared to 35.5% of all Oregonians. While overall respondents with a post-secondary education was similar to the general population, the survey sample had a slighter higher percentage of respondents with a Bachelor's degree or higher.
- Approximately 14% of responses came from minority populations, similar to the 17% of all WorkSource customers and 11.6% in the general population.
- Age was the one area of disparity given that 47 was the average age of survey respondents compared to 39 for users in the overall WorkSource system and 37.6 for workers in the general statewide labor force.

Data was analyzed statewide and by geographic regions based on labor markets and regional economies. The survey explored regional differences between job seeker perceptions about WorkSource, as well as their experience and satisfaction with WorkSource services. The regions included:

- Coastal Oregon: Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook, Lincoln, Coos and Curry counties
- Portland Metro: Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties
- Mid Willamette Valley: Marion, Polk and Yamhill counties
- South Willamette Valley: Benton, Lane and Linn counties
- Southern Oregon: Douglas, Jackson and Josephine counties
- Central and South Central: Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson, Klamath and Lake counties
- Gorge and Eastern: Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Hood River, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Wasco, Malheur and Wheeler Counties

## Statewide Summary of Job Seeker Survey

- **Initial Perception:** More than 80% of job seekers knew little about WorkSource prior to their use, and/or viewed it narrowly as a place for unemployed workers. This underscores perceptions of WorkSource still having the stigma as the “unemployment department.”
- **Reason for Using:** Almost 90% of respondents first came to WorkSource for their unemployment claims; few came because they were seeking services outside of unemployment. This reinforces the general perception that the public is unaware of the full range of assistance offered through the WorkSource system including training and skill development, youth, career advancement support and other workforce services.
- **Services commonly used:** 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 post-secondary 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.
- **Niche Services:** Training and skill development services included basic skills training, work-based training, GED courses, financial aid for school based training, and National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) or other credentials.. These were far less utilized—ranging from 8-17%, and often lower in rural regions, especially in Eastern Oregon.
  - Approximately 70% of those using training and skill development services thought they met or exceeded expectations (lower than the over 80% of satisfaction with job placement services).
  - Those dissatisfied with the services noted schedules were inconvenient, training sessions were not offered frequently enough, or the program content made them less than optimal.
  - While many respondents not using these services reported that they did not need them, a significant portion noted they were unaware of certain services or those wanting to use them learned they were not eligible.



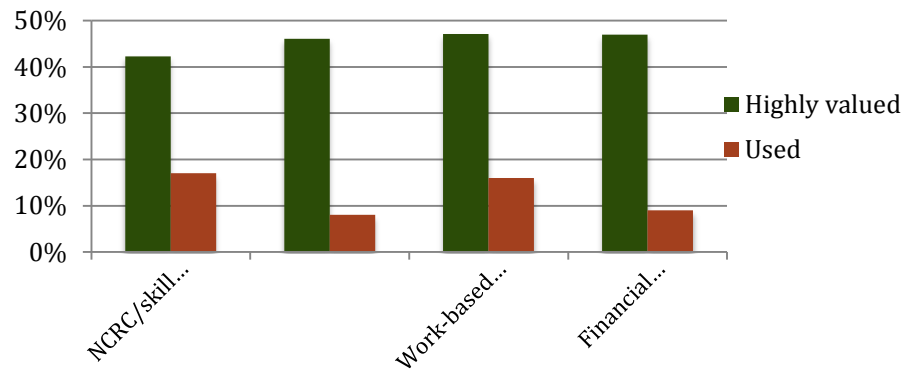
- **Desired Services:** Many skill development and training services have eligibility requirements preventing access to a broad base of job seekers. The survey was designed to understand what people would use or value regardless of current requirements that may be restricting use. We asked job seekers to tell us what skill development and training services should be available in the future. Respondents were asked to rate the value of having various WorkSource training services available to

them. They were directed to select one of five responses: not valuable, somewhat valuable, valuable, highly valuable and extremely valuable.

This question provided a comparison between the percent of respondents rating a service highly valuable and their actual use of the same service. This yielded an identifiable value gap for these programs; in other words, the level of service that is not being fulfilled. While on average only 12% of respondents used work or school based training programs, over 45% of respondents placed a high value on having these programs available to them or others. Similar patterns were found for basic skills, GED, NCRC and other credential 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 such as those listed below indicate that the content and delivery of these services also need to be updated:

- They were told they did not qualify for a program.
- They were informed that the program “ran out of funding.”
- Classes were full or at a time that conflicted with other obligations.
- They did not know about the program.

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



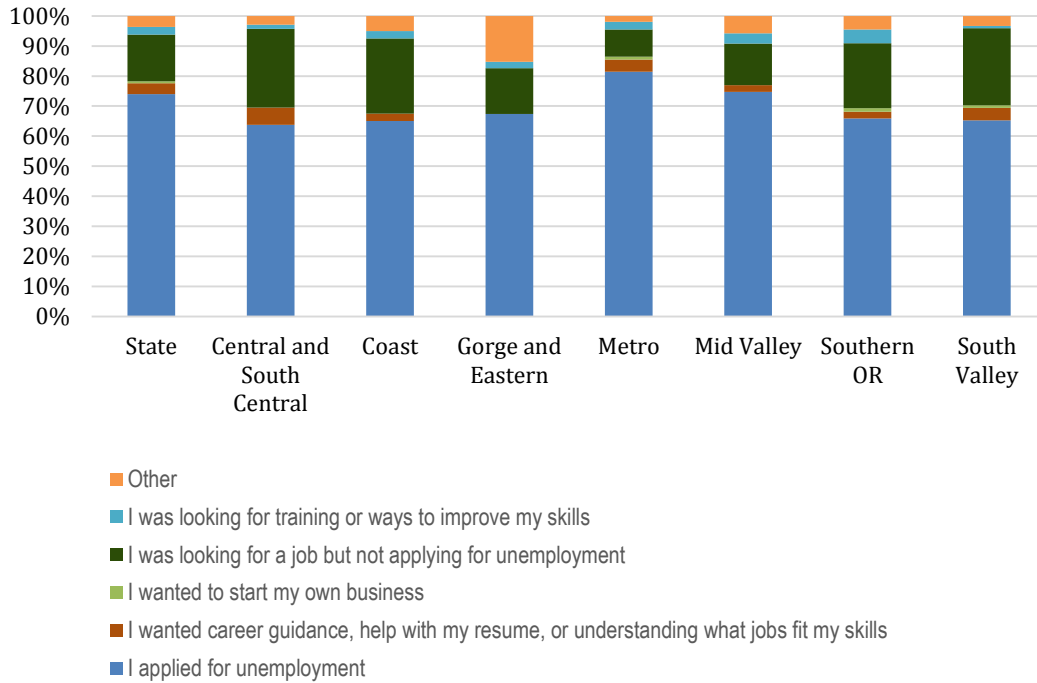
- **iMatchSkills:** iMatchSkills (the job matching software tool) was not well utilized; almost 60% of those starting iMatchSkills did not complete it. An overwhelming number of write-in comments included terms such as “complicated,” “hard to use”, “useless”, “cumbersome”, and “ineffective” to describe iMatchSkills.
- **Customer Satisfaction:** Customer satisfaction with staff was very high. Statewide, over 90% of respondents had a favorable experience with WorkSource. When asked about the best part of their WorkSource experience, 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 recognizing how hard staff tried to assist them even if program eligibility may have prevented the respondent from using a service.

## Regional Analysis

### Point of Entry: What causes job seekers to use WorkSource?

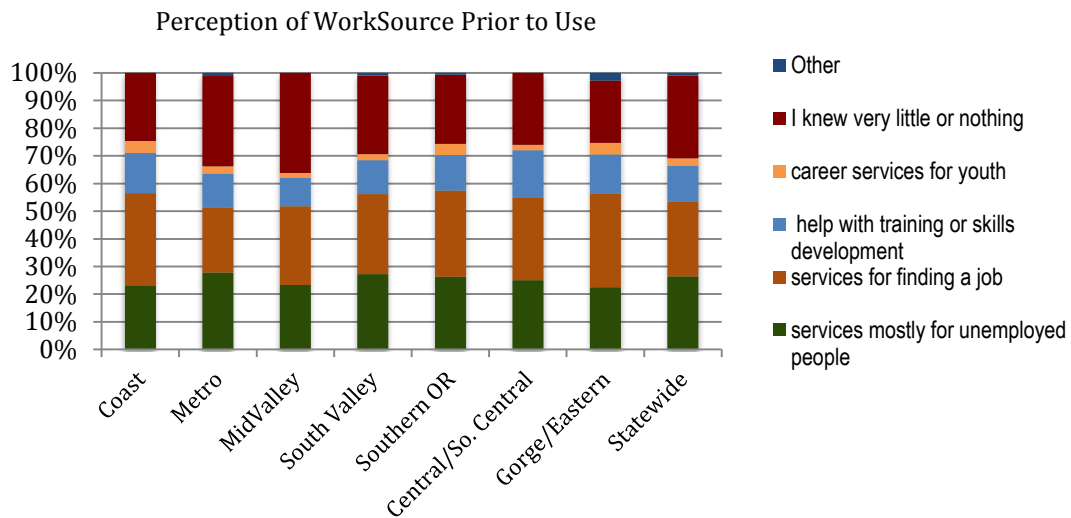
The survey asked respondents the primary reason they first went to a WorkSource center or used a WorkSource service. Almost 75% of respondents first came to a WorkSource center to apply for unemployment or as a result of their unemployment insurance (UI) claim. Approximately 15% of respondents said they were looking for a job, but were not applying for UI. Less than 5% were seeking career guidance or help with skill development.

Point of Entry - Percent by Region



**Initial Perception: How did customers perceive WorkSource prior to their use?**

Respondents were asked to provide their perception about WorkSource prior to their first visit. Almost 1/3 of responders noted they knew little or nothing about WorkSource, and 53% responded that they perceived it as a place for the unemployed or for those looking for a job. Less than 12% knew about the broader array of training and youth services offered by WorkSource. This aligned with comments expressed by employers at the regional forums that WorkSource was known to them as the “unemployment department.” These perceptions were fairly consistent across state as demonstrated in chart below.



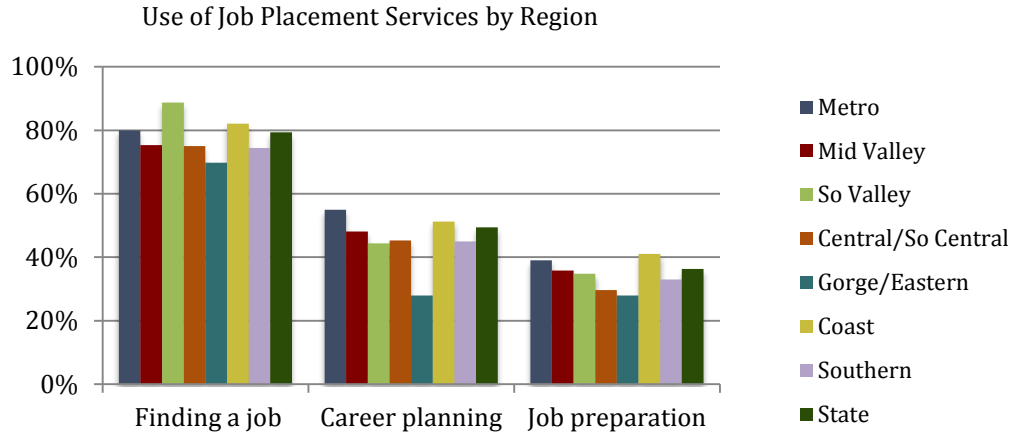
**Use of Services: What services did customers use once they entered the system?**

Respondents were asked to note which types of WorkSource services they have used over time. [Note that these responses reflect what respondents chose to use due to their need or knowledge of the program. It does not necessarily reflect the actual distribution of resources or services across regions.]

By far, the most widely used service was help in finding a job. Not surprising, since the primary reason respondents visited a WorkSource center was to obtain unemployment insurance. Almost half of respondents noted they used some type of career planning and assessment services and 36% took advantage of job preparation programs such as assistance with resumes and interviewing techniques. In addition to services directly related to preparing for and finding a job, WorkSource delivers a variety of skill development and training programs. These programs, however, are far less utilized due to a variety of factors that may include the overall funding availability or capacity of the service, the population or skill set being targeted, etc.

Comparing service usage by region, the data showed that some services were consistently used region to region, while others had a greater range in the percent of job seekers using particular services. The following information highlights regional similarity and difference for the WorkSource service categories listed below:

**Job Referral, Career Planning and Job Preparation Services:** Most of these services were fairly consistent across regions, with the exception of low use of career planning services in the Gorge and Eastern Oregon. This region is also had a very high percent of users that did not complete I-Match and had a large number of criticisms about the ineffectiveness of I-Match to jobs in their region.



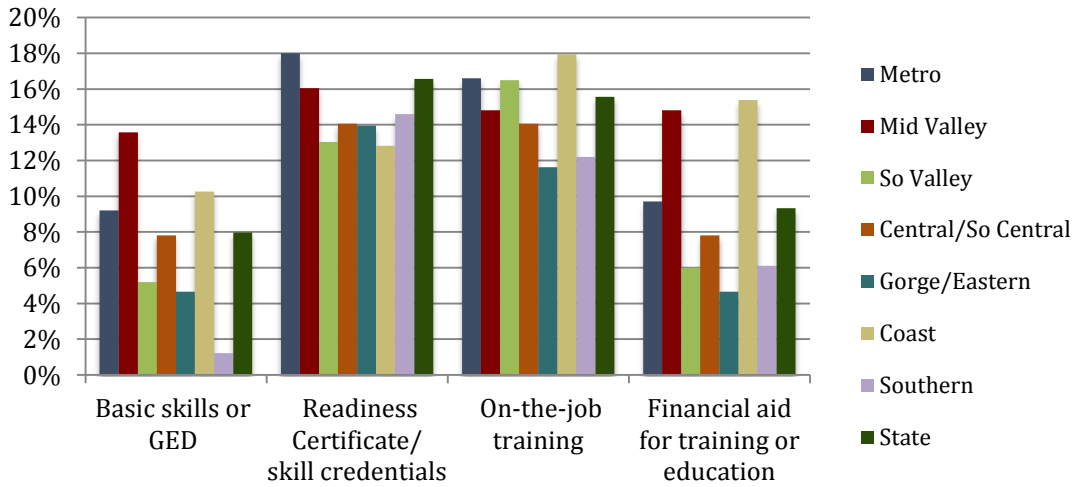
**Basic Skills Training and GED Services:** Only 8% of respondents reported using basic skills training or GED services that included on-line, workshop and classroom options. The usage ranged from a high of 14% in the Mid Willamette Valley to a low of 1.2% in Southern Oregon. The primary reason people listed for not using these training services was that “they did not need it.” Yet, 40% of respondents had a high school education or less which is the targeted customer for this service. This data substantiates the disconnect that exists between the actual skills and what respondents at the lower educational levels believe they have or need to obtain secure employment. This highlights one of the most consistently mentioned challenges from employers with regards to finding qualified workers with basic skills.

**Skills Credentials including NCRC:** Just over 16% of respondents said they received services related to obtaining a NCRC or other skill credential. This had little variation among regions of the state. Not surprising, that data showed that most of those receiving this service fell into two age groups; those under 25 years of age and those 25-34 years of age.

**On-the-job or Work-based Training:** About 15.5% of respondents utilized some type of work-based training services. There was slightly lower use of these types of service in southern and eastern Oregon (12%) and slightly higher use in coastal regions (18%), however, this range of use is expected given the low overall numbers of people receiving this service. There was little variation in use by age groups, and there were clear findings of low usage by those with higher education levels.

**Assistance for School-Based Training:** On a statewide basis, about 9% of respondents reported receiving some type of financial assistance for school-based training. Use of this service ranged from 5% in eastern Oregon to 15% in coastal regions. In areas where there was low use of school-based training assistance, there was also a high percent of comments from those not using these services expressing that they were either unaware of the program or told they did not qualify.

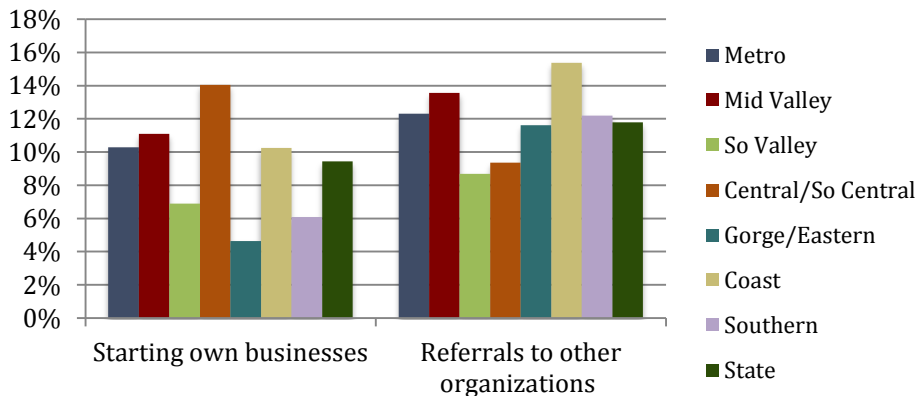
Use of Training & Skill Development Services by Region



**Self-employment Services:** The percent of people seeking self-employment assistance was 9.3%. This varied greatly from region to region, with no particular bias for urban or rural areas. This may reflect the availability of self-employment support services in various regions, the degree of marketing and/or the knowledge of such services by WorkSource staff.

**Referrals to Social Services:** A significant number of respondents using WorkSource centers did not need or qualify for social services such as housing, transportation, child care or other assistance covered under technical assistance for needy families (TANF). This was reflected in survey results that indicated less than 12% of respondents used referrals to these other services.

Use of Other Services by Region



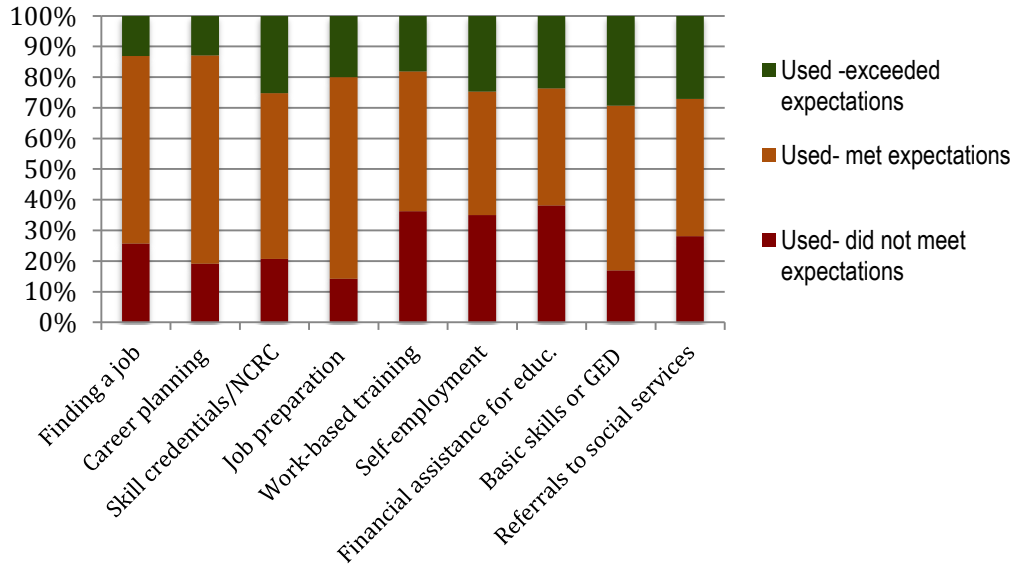
**Satisfaction with Services: To what degree were customers satisfied with the services they received?**

On average, respondents thought services met or exceeded expectations approximately 75% of the time. Job preparation services and basic skills/GED training received slightly higher satisfaction ratings, while work-based and school-based training received slightly lower satisfaction ratings.

Those not satisfied were asked to explain why. Comments included:

- Finding a job: Jobs available didn't match their education or skill level; jobs were mostly entry level while they had more experience/education.
- Basic skills and school-based training: the schedules were not convenient, the classes were too spread out, or the selection of available programs was limited.
- Self-employment: the content of the service was not very useful. Didn't feel like staff knew enough to adequately help.

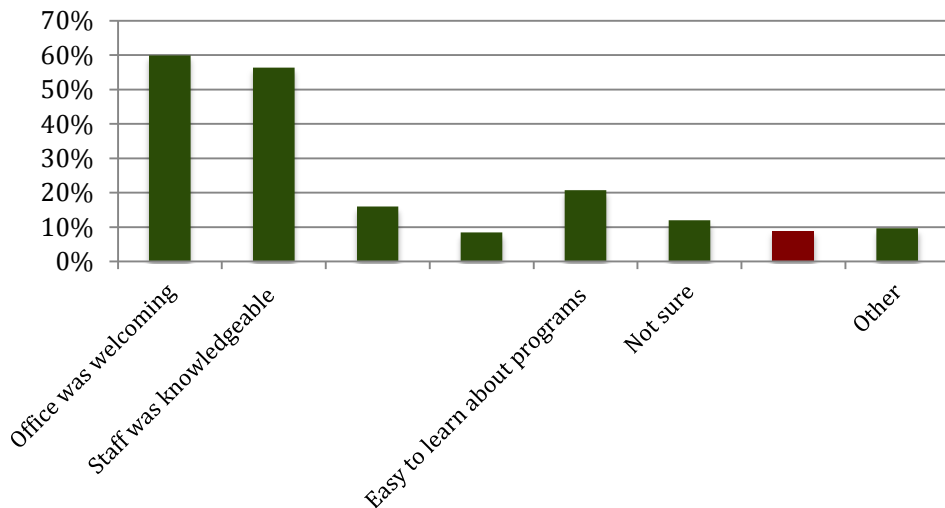
Satisfaction of Services Used: Statewide



Note: Due to the low use of some services and the further geographic breakdown, a regional analysis of this question could not be statistically supported. The patterns among regions, however, were very similar to the statewide average.

Statewide, over 90% of respondents had a favorable experience with WorkSource, even though they may not have found services effective or useful. People visiting WorkSource centers reported that a welcoming environment with friendly and knowledgeable staff was what they liked best about their experience. Less than 15% of respondents noted the effectiveness of job or training services.

What respondents liked best about experience: Statewide

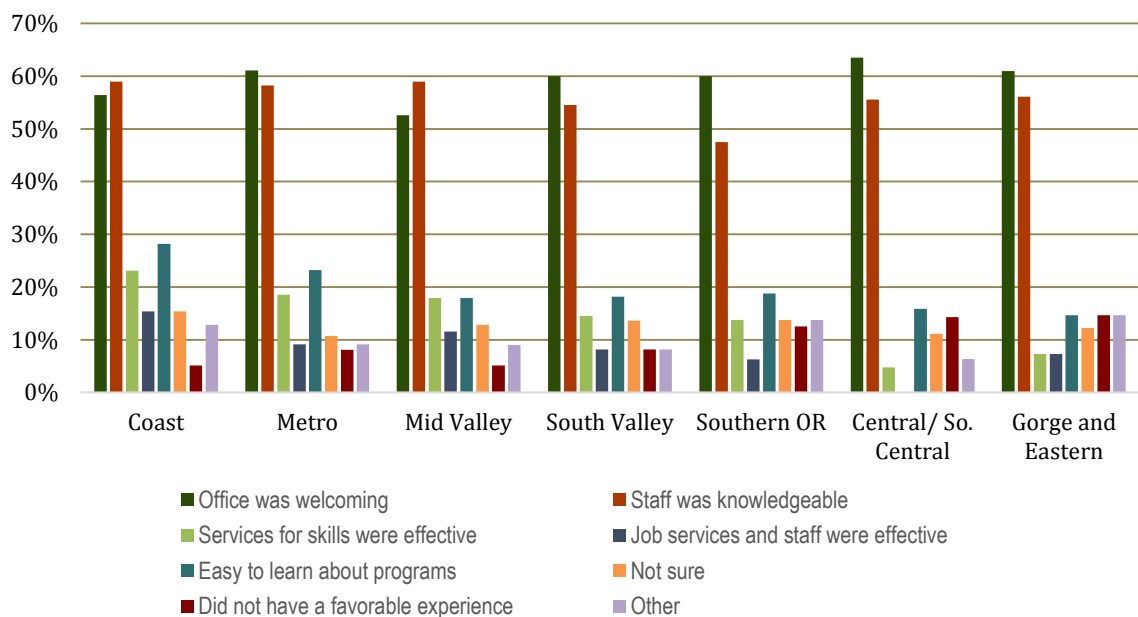




Respondents provided some insight about the low recognition of job service effectiveness through their comments pointing to the mismatch between applicant skill level and the job postings available in the system. Those with college degrees or post-secondary education were far less likely to find job services effective because as they noted, most job referrals they received, if any, required less education and experience. These comments also align with input from employers who explained their use of WorkSource was primarily for entry-level jobs and less so for higher skilled jobs where they tend to use staffing agencies or other means of recruitment.

In their open-ended responses about skill development and training services many respondents noted that although staff tried to assist them, program requirements, unavailable funding or other restrictions prevented them from receiving the services they sought. This corresponds to the feedback from employer forums where program requirements severely limited the use of many training services.

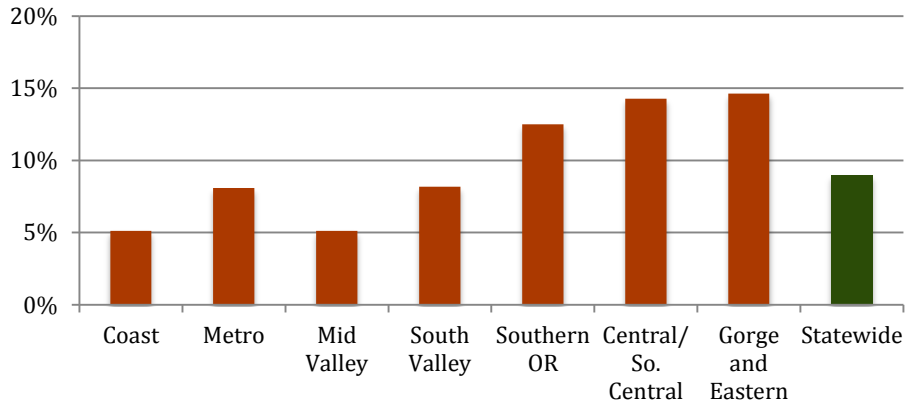
What respondents liked best about WorkSource experience



With the exception of the respondents from the coast, the survey results showed that respondents who did not have a favorable experience tended to live in areas outside the Portland and Willamette Valley regions. The primary comments explaining their negative experience centered around three themes:

- The lack of coordination among services and the feeling that they were being pushed from one agency to another.
- The lack of physical co-location, requiring additional travel and time to obtain needed services.
- The initial procedure of completing what respondents noted as a long and overly-complicated iMatchSkills process before they could access the services they came to use.
-

Percent Of Respondents That Did Not Have A Favorable Experience



## Summary

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

- Misperceptions about WorkSource prevent those not seeking unemployment insurance from using the system. This narrows the quantity and diversity of skill and experience levels in the WorkSource applicant pool.
- Approximately 40% of WorkSource users have an associate degree or higher. Yet, employers report using WorkSource mostly for finding entry-level or lower wage jobs (due to their perception of who uses the system). This appears to have resulted in a mismatch between job placement services and available employment opportunities/job postings for those with higher education or experience levels.
- Training programs, especially work-based programs, are highly valued by job seekers who wish to see more resources allocated to training and an increased flexibility in being able to utilize these programs.
- Current job matching tools (iMatchSkills) is ineffective; with job seekers noting that the one size fits all assessment process is not working. They do, however, view the staff assistance and coaching as very useful and would like to see more flexibility built into the orientation and/or welcome process.
- Employers noted a significant lack of basic skills among entry level workers, and many job seekers (over 50%) using WorkSource have a high school education or less. Yet, the use of basic skills training by survey respondents was less than 10%, indicating a disconnect may exist between the perceived need for the service and the actual delivery. 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 ratings, emphasizing the importance of intentional collaboration in providing a seamless delivery system.