**POLICY BRIEF**

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From: Agnes Balassa, ABSLLC

Re: Policy recommendation to clarify expectations for provision of services in PacMtn AJC Network/WorkSource System

**Background:** During IFA negotiations and site certification discussions in the PacMtn region, partners asked what it means to “provide access” to services via WorkSource/AJC sites. Are partners required to provide services on-site at the WorkSource center or affiliates? WIOA sets a minimum standard, which is described below, and allows state and/or local workforce boards to set higher standards for partner participation in WorkSource sites. This brief is intended to help PacMtn determine and communicate what it means to provide access to services on-site in the PacMtn region.

TEGL16-16 *One-Stop Operating Guidance for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*, specifies that a comprehensive one-stop center is “a physical location where job seekers and employer customers ***can access*** the programs, services, and activities of ***all required one-stop partners*** [emphasis added] (section 121(b)(1)(B) of WIOA), along with any additional partners as determined by the Local WDB.” The “required partners” are listed in Appendix A. While six of the required partners are identified as “core partners” (Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth, Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title III Wagner Peyser, and Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation), there is no distinction between the expectation for core and other partners to make services accessible to customers.

**Must partners be on-site to make services available in the center?**

WIOA specifies that at least one WIOA title I staff person must be physically present at a comprehensive center. WIOA does not specify which of the WIOA title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker or Youth) should fund that staff. WIOA also requires that “Wagner-Peyser Act ES programs must be co-located in comprehensive and/or affiliate American Job Centers.” If the Wagner-Peyser Act staff are part of an affiliate site, “there must be staff of at least one other partner in that affiliated site that is physically present more than 50 percent of the time the center is open.” The organizations administering “local veterans’ employment representatives, disabled veterans’ outreach program specialists, or unemployment compensation programs” do not count as the “other partner for purposes of this requirement.”

WIOA does not specify that any of the other required partners be on-site in centers or affiliate sites. In fact, TEGL 16-16 states that “providing career services ***does not mean that each required partner must provide these services directly on-site*** [emphasis added] at the comprehensive American Job Center. However, it does mean that some career services must be provided directly on-site. Career services may be provided through access to one-stop partner programs and activities, which, as described in 20 CFR 678.305(d), 34 CFR 361.305(d), and 34 CFR 463.305(d), may be delivered in one of three ways:

* Option 1. Having a program staff member physically present at the American Job Center;
* Option 2. Having a staff member from a different partner program physically present at the American Job Center and *appropriately trained* to provide information to customers about the programs, services, and activities available through all partner programs; or
* Option 3. Making available a direct linkage through technology to a program staff member who can provide meaningful information or services.”

Direct linkage is defined as “providing a direct connection at the American Job Center within a reasonable time, by phone or through a real-time Web-based communication, to a program staff member who can provide program information or services, including career services, to the customer. Solely providing a phone number, Web site, information, pamphlets, or materials does not constitute a “direct linkage…Local WDBs, in conjunction with the partners and one-stop operator(s), must establish the method or means of providing access to partner programs and document such means or methods in their Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)…The frequency of program staff’s physical presence in an affiliated site will be determined through partner MOU negotiations at the local level, within the parameters of the Federal regulations at 20 CFR 678.310 through 678.320, 34 CFR 361.310 through 361.320, and 34 CFR 463.310 through 463.320.”

**Are there any additional criteria for providing on-site access?**

WIOA requires each state workforce board to “establish objective criteria and procedures for the Local WDBs to use in evaluating the effectiveness, physical and programmatic accessibility, and continuous improvement of American Job Centers.” Washington WorkSource Policy #5612 requires local workforce boards to use the statewide *Application for WorkSource Certification* to certify one-stop sites. The application sets a higher standard than WIOA by requiring comprehensive one-stop sites to, at a minimum:

* Provide basic and individualized career services, training services and business services and
* ***Have representation of five mandated partners (WIOA Titles I-IV, TANF) on site*** [emphasis added].

The policy also requires affiliated sites to, “at a minimum, provide access to basic career services and have representation of one or more mandated [i.e. required] partner on site.”

PacMtn’s regional plan, MOU and policy do not identify any additional expectations for partners to provide access to their services by being on-site at WorkSource sites. The PacMtn Regional Strategic Plan emphasizes universal access to include physical accessibility to facilities as well as coordination among partners to provide customized access to services based on individual customer needs and to increase points of access.  The plan calls out the use of technology as a mechanism to increase access to services.

**Recommendations:**

While WIOA defines three ways to “provide access” to services at WorkSource sites. state policy sets a higher bar, stating that the “five mandated partners” (WIOA Title I through IV and TANF) to be “represented” at the center. However, state policy does not define what it means to be “represented”. Therefore, ABSLLC believes it falls to local areas to define these terms.

Access to a full array of high-quality workforce services is at the heart of WIOA and the primary rationale for creating a one-stop system. The highest level of access a customer can have is to connect with staff who are able to provide all the services that customer needs in “one-stop” – without having to travel to a variety of places and wait for appointments, etc. The most obvious way to achieve this level of access is to require staff from all required partners to provide services on-site. However, it would be unrealistic, expensive and potentially duplicative for all required partners operating in the PacMtn region to move into the center and affiliates. Therefore, ABSLLC recommends the following:

1. ***Clarify what it means for a partner to be “represented” on-site.*** PactMtn should set a minimum expectation for what it means for the mandatory partners (WIOA Title I through IV and TANF) identified in state policy to be “represented” on-site -

* **Center**: PacMtn should specify a goal in policy for all of the mandatory partners identified in state policy to commit staff to provide access to career services (see appendix B for a list of career services) on-site at the center, one-on-one, in small groups, or in workshop settings, with the specifics clarified in the center site agreement. Title I is required by WIOA to be on-site at the center and Wagner Peyser services must be available in collaboration with at least one partner, not provided as stand-alone services; it would make sense to require a full time presence of these two partners. WorkFirst and Vocational Rehabilitation currently have more than a full-time presence on-site. The policy should require each of these programs to maintain at least one full time staff offering career services at the center. Title II and the Department of Services for the Blind are the only two mandatory partners who do not have a presence in the center. A lower requirement could be established for these programs with the intention of growth over time. Perhaps at least one staff member on-site at least 8 hours per week for title II, and maybe 8 hours per month for DSB? The center site agreement would spell out what each partner commits to in terms of staffing and how shared functions will be resourced. The site agreement should specify which of the career services provided by each partner will be offered on-site to meet the needs of the customers accessing the center.
* **Affiliates:** The policy should specify that at least one WIOA title I and one WIOA title III staff provide services on-site full time and at least one staff member from another program is on-site delivering career services at least eight hours per week. These services may be delivered one-on-one, in small groups, or in workshop settings, depending on what is of the greatest need and value to the customers accessing the center. Again, specifics would be spelled out in the affiliate site agreements.
* **Connection Sites:** The policy should specify that connection sites do not need to have the any of the WIOA required partners on-site, but must be able to provide access to specified career services via direct linkage as defined below.

As technology improves, more services will be provided by remote access. A staff person in the center could provide services to a customer in an affiliate or connection site via Skype or some other form of video conferencing. PacMtn policy should establish a longer-term goal of increasing the use of technology to assure that customers have access to the full array of services regardless of which site they choose to access. The use of technology should not replace the minimum expectations set forth in bullets listed above, and should meet the standards for direct linkage described below.

1. ***Clarify what it means to provide “access” to services.*** The approach described above does not resolve the need to provide on-site access to the services of ***all*** of the required partners. There are two mechanisms, besides on-site staff, prescribed by WIOA to provide the access to services -

* **Cross Training:** PacMtn has already started down this path with its approach to business services. PacMtn should identify which other services should be provided via cross training in the region – eligibility determination for enrollment into specific programs? A core set of job seeker workshops delivered by staff from any program? Outreach activities? Marketing? What do these and/or other possible functions look like when provided by staff funded by a variety of partners on and off WorkSource sites? PacMtn should spell out these expectations in policy.
* **Direct Linkage:** Spell out the expectation for the required partners to make a direct linkage referral through technology to a partner staff member who can provide meaningful information or services to a customer in need. Set the expectation that staff at each center, affiliate and connection site have contacts they can access to make a direction linkage anywhere in the system, starting with the mandatory partners identified in state policy and expanding to all of the required and other partners over time. Clarify that there must be a handoff to a person who can help the customer at the other end of the line – similar to the business help line – and create the agreements to assure follow through.

1. ***Clarify in policy that the expectations defined above are floor not a ceiling.*** Specify that the criteria above are base level criteria. Sites are expected to meet and then exceed them.
2. ***Institutionalize these criteria in policy and procedures.*** Finalize and publish the policy that specifies these expectations. Develop and publish site agreements and SOPs to communicate expectations to staff. Monitor for these expectations and embed them in the site certification process.

*Revised 10/01/18*