



# Recommendations for Reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act

The following recommendations for WIA reauthorization represent the input of workforce development providers and advocates in Chicago and across Illinois, as collected by the Chicago Jobs Council (a coalition of community-based training organizations, advocacy groups, businesses, and individuals that works to ensure access to employment and career advancement opportunities for people living in poverty). They provide a framework for developing a system that both responds to employers' needs and serves the most disadvantaged job-seekers.

## System structure and infrastructure

- 1) Prioritize both the needs of job-seekers and employers through the WIA system, but restructure the system to be able to serve the most disadvantaged job-seekers;
- 2) Ensure multiple points of entry, and linkages to appropriate services regardless of the entry point;
- 3) Adequately fund a range of core and post-employment retention services; and
- 4) Eliminate the sequence of service requirement.

## Cross-system and access to service coordination

- 1) Expand the use of sector-based strategies, which bring together training providers and industry-specific employers, as a way to foster coordination between the workforce development and economic development systems;
- 2) Formalize coordination between the WIA Title I and WIA Title II systems so that the adult education system is an entry point to workforce development services;
- 3) Expand resources for transitional jobs programs to spur better collaboration with human services systems and improve access to workforce development services for hard to serve populations;
- 4) Expand bridge programming to foster collaboration between adult education (including ESL and remedial education) and higher education, to provide an entry point for low-skilled individuals, and to link low-skilled individuals with occupational training and career pathways; and
- 5) Adopt more appropriate performance measures as innovative program models are incorporated into the WIA system.

## Training

- 1) Formalize sector-based strategies and prioritize initiatives that serve disadvantaged job-seekers;
- 2) Ensure that curricula in sector-based training programs are informed by industry experts;
- 3) Develop rigorous federal requirements for certifying training providers and require the publication of up-to-date information about training providers;
- 4) Require training providers to collaborate with the core and intensive services providers to ensure a successful job placement upon training completion; and
- 5) Provide dedicated funding for support services and income supports (such as paid work experiences, stipends, and needs related payments) for individuals in training programs.

## Performance measures and administrative barriers

- 1) Develop less absolute performance measures (i.e. focus on wage *change*, not wage *amount*);
- 2) Create performance measures that look at additional outcomes for job-seekers (i.e. attaining additional skills and credentials or achieving self sufficiency);
- 3) Weight performance measures that so that providers who serve disadvantaged populations can achieve lower outcomes and still meet their benchmarks;
- 4) Allow categorical eligibility for specific groups of job-seekers (i.e. those already deemed eligible for free/reduced price lunch, TANF, public housing, etc. are automatically eligible for WIA with no additional documentation required); and
- 5) Create a more transparent process for determining eligibility so it is not subject to the discretion of each local workforce area.

Now more than ever we must make sure that individuals left behind by our education, workforce development and economic development systems have access to the services they need to enter the labor market and advance into self-sustaining jobs. Implementing the recommendations outlined above will begin to ensure that our public workforce development resources are directed to the most critical areas and are used effectively by those most in need of them.

For more information,  
please contact:

Jennifer Keeling  
Director of City Policy  
jennifer@cj.net  
312.252.0460  
www.cj.net