



Workforce Investment System: Public Policy Positions

Adopted by the
Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board

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Overview & Summary

Background

In June 2003, the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board (PWIB), led by its Public Investments Committee, embarked on an initiative to clarify the PWIB's policies related to the public workforce system. This effort was prompted by a drastic cut in core federal funds to support the system; although the buying power of those funds had been diminishing gradually over the last decade – until recently, a result of level funding or slight funding reductions coupled with increased costs – the current year saw a decrease of nearly 20 percent, or over \$3 million dollars.

To set the context for the discussion, the Public Investments Committee posed six policy questions:

- Is the workforce system fundamentally about job attachment, or is it about skill enhancement?
- What should the balance be between the services offered in multiple locations across the city and service centralized at a few locations?
- How should the *CareerLink* system provide services to people in neighborhoods be balanced, particularly during a time of reduced state and federal funding which may limit physical locations?
- What type of investments in training make the most sense given limited resources? As a follow-up, what is the best way to balance customer choice against skill demand?
- What policies can be developed to maximize resources to provide non-training workforce services (counseling, assessment, labor exchange information, pre-screening, résumé development, etc.) to employers and individual customers?
- The *Workforce Investment Act* allows cost-sharing for employer and individual customers. Is this a strategy that should be pursued? If so, what policies should guide cost recovery activities?

The Public Investments Committee, PWIB members, and other implementation partners participated in two meetings in August 2003 to discuss these questions and develop draft policy statements. Statements were developed for five of the six questions. The issue of cost sharing was deferred for future study. It was noted at these sessions, and repeatedly throughout the policy development process, that the policy on the purpose of the workforce system would drive all other policy positions taken by the PWIB.

The draft statements, which were further enhanced by the Public Investments Committee following the August sessions, were introduced to the PWIB at its September 2003 Business Meeting. The statements were then widely disseminated for public comment and all comments were summarized.

On November 19, 2003, the Public Investments Committee convened a group of over two dozen interested parties for a Stakeholder Forum to consider all comments and develop final recommendations for the Public Investments Committee. The Public Investments Committee met on December 3, and made final policy recommendations to the PWIB. The PWIB adopted the positions on December 11, 2003.

Next Steps

The following pages reflect five policy statements, which will serve to guide the investment of public resources in workforce development services and activities.

In addition, inherent in these policies – and reflected in the “discussion” sections – are several action steps for the PWIB. These items are:

- An evaluation of the *CareerLink* system to precede any further expansion beyond sites in operation or development.
- The development and implementation of a comprehensive marketing plan with the goal of cultivating relationships with employers and developing new partnerships and Access Points.
- The development of operating guidelines to steer the investment of:
 - *Workforce Investment Act* resources as seed money for centers.
 - Maximizing core training investments.
- Finally, to reflect the original consensus in August regarding cost sharing, a working group is to be convened to further explore this issue.

Participation & Acknowledgements

The development of these policy questions and resulting policy positions was made possible through the volunteer efforts of over 40 people committed to building and guiding a world-class workforce system in Philadelphia and across the region. The Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board and its Public Investments Committee are grateful for the contributions to this effort made by the following individuals: Linda Blanchette, Gail Bober, Judi Cassel, H. Patrick Clancy, Della Clark, Rev. Luis Cortez, Patricia Coyle, Anthony Cunningham, Stephen Curtis, George Davis, Patrick Eiding, Janet Ginzberg, Charles Greene, Cheryl Feldman, Joseph Fischgrund, Patricia Funaro, Carol Goertzel, Susan Gutschow, Karen Harvey, Rose Higby, Christine James-Brown, Ernest Jones, Tsiwen Law, Annette Mattei, Susan McKelvey-Goggins, Patricia Merk, Dale Porter, William Ribble, Linda Richman, Janet Ryder, Andrea Saenz, Barbara Saverino, Kevin Schnieders, Robert Schnieders, Les Spero, Nicholas Torres, Anthony Triolo, JoAnn Weinberger, Andrew Wigglesworth, Shelly Yanoff, Edward Zale, and Gail Zukerman.

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Public Policy Positions

Purpose of Philadelphia's Workforce System

The purpose of Philadelphia's workforce system is to: promote the economic development strategies of the region; assess and attach people to jobs with needed services for long-term career growth leading to self-sufficiency; and respond to employer needs. The success of the workforce system in meeting these purposes is predicated on the full participation of all investors in training, education and development of the labor force at all stages, as well as participation of the array of partners whose expertise is workforce development.

CareerLink Service Availability

Philadelphia's one-stop service delivery system, *CareerLink*, can achieve significant benefits for employer and individual customers through centralization of some services, while ensuring accessibility (e.g., physical, cultural, geographic and linguistic), quality, and efficiency serve as the foundation in determining service availability. Components critical to the success of the one-stop system in realizing this goal include the development of credible and strategic points of connection to the system (centers and access points) and appropriately trained and culturally competent staff.

Infrastructure Investments in Philadelphia's One-Stop System

It is necessary to limit establishment of any additional *CareerLink* Centers until a city-wide needs analysis for services is conducted and current sites are evaluated for quality, efficiency, capacity, access, and level of utilization. Further, a periodic evaluation of the *CareerLink* system is necessary to ensure quality of service, effectiveness and efficiency, while employing continuous improvement practices. The PWIB strongly encourages investment in continued development of non-mandated partner relationships to help leverage resources into the *CareerLink* infrastructure.

Training Investments

Philadelphia's approach to investing its core funds in training should be employer-driven and emphasize outcomes and long-term benefits for individuals, with appropriate focus on economic development and meeting the needs of strategic industry clusters. Further, every effort should be made to maximize all other potential resources for skills training and non-training services to employers and individual customers.

Career Development Services

Philadelphia's workforce system should maximize career development services (job readiness, prescreening, and job matching) with an initial focus on building strategic partnerships to expand the availability of such services. Key to the success of this effort is optimizing relationships with *CareerLink* mandated partners.

A discussion of each position can be found in **Appendix I**.

Appendix I: Public Policy Discussion Summary

Purpose of Philadelphia's Workforce System

Recommended Policy Statement¹

The purpose of Philadelphia's workforce system is to: promote the economic development strategies of the region; assess and attach people to jobs with needed services for long-term career growth leading to self-sufficiency; and respond to employer needs. The success of the workforce system in meeting these purposes is predicated on the full participation of all investors in training, education and development of the labor force at all stages, as well as participation of the array of partners whose expertise is workforce development.

Discussion

Comments from and discussions with workforce and economic development stakeholders focused on the PWIB's initial draft policy statement regarding the purpose of the workforce system, which suggests that the **primary** goal of the workforce system is **job attachment**.

Generally, there was overall support for the draft policy statement. However, it was agreed that **meeting the economic development needs of the region should be the primary driver for the workforce system**. Therefore, the recommendation is to revise the policy statement to reflect this economic development focus. Additionally, it was concluded the system must:

1. Promote the economic development strategies of the region;
2. Assess and attach people to jobs with opportunity and services for long-term career growth that will lead to self-sufficiency; and
3. Respond to the needs of employers.

In addition to the list above, the importance of **maximizing the participation of all investors and partners who impact or benefit from the workforce system** was articulated and added a statement to the policy position to this effect. It was affirmed the workforce system should focus on the following, as these concepts are critical to success in the workplace and, hence, the economic vibrancy of the region:

- Life-long learning for individual job-seekers.
- Current labor market and career development information.
- Access to needed social services (e.g. transportation and childcare).
- Responsiveness to employer need.

There was consensus that job attachment is the appropriate primary focus for the workforce system, provided it includes the elements highlighted above.

¹ Original Draft Policy Statement: The PWIB believes that the purpose of Philadelphia's workforce system is to: assess and attach people to jobs with needed support for long-term career growth leading to self-sufficiency; meet employer needs; and support the economic development strategies of the region.

CareerLink Service Availability

Recommended Policy Statement²

Philadelphia's one-stop service delivery system, *CareerLink*, can achieve significant benefits for employer and individual customers through centralization of some services, while ensuring accessibility (e.g., physical, cultural, geographic and linguistic), quality, and efficiency serve as the foundation in determining service availability. Components critical to the success of the one-stop system in realizing this goal include the development of credible and strategic points of connection to the system (centers and access points³) and appropriately trained and culturally competent staff.

Discussion

Comments from and discussions with workforce and economic development stakeholder communities focused on balancing the centralization of services while assuring maximum accessibility, quality, and efficiency to meet the needs of customers.

There was general agreement with the draft policy statement; however, comments and discussion led to its enhancement to reflect additional conditions important to providing customers the greatest access to *CareerLink* services, including the following:

- Appropriately trained and culturally competent staff, which should include staffs of community-based organizations that serve target populations.
- Use of Access Points (1) as a mechanism to engage customers in the *CareerLink* system and (2) as hub locations to meet the unique needs of special populations (e.g., people with disabilities, women in transition, and older workers).
- Partnerships with organizations that can provide needed supplemental resources.

It also was agreed that staff-assisted services should be available at most locations; however, it is reasonable to **limit the availability of some services given the following considerations:**

- Availability of services at another location within a particular geographic radius (either through *CareerLink* or another institution/provider);
- Demand for a particular service;
- Expertise of staff to provide specialized services (e.g., financial aid assistance and industry-specific pre-screening);

² Original Draft Policy Statement: The PWIB believes Philadelphia's one-stop service delivery system, *CareerLink*, can achieve significant benefits for employer and individual customers by centralizing some services, while ensuring maximum accessibility (physical, cultural, geographic and language), quality, and efficiency serve as the foundation for determining service availability.

³ Access Points provide Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) electronic access to the *CareerLink* system and its services. Staff at these sites are trained by *CareerLink* staff to be aware of the full range of services available to customers at comprehensive *CareerLink* Centers.

- Cost of the services provided; and
- Ability to provide the services at an acceptable level of quality.

Overall, there was support for the centralization of some *CareerLink* services – provided the specific conditions previously stated are considered and customers are given the best available service. There also was consensus on the need to conduct an evaluation of the current system to guide any further development and improvement activity.

Infrastructure Investments in Philadelphia's One-Stop System

Recommended Policy Statement⁴

It is necessary to limit establishment of any additional *CareerLink* Centers until a citywide needs analysis for services is conducted and current sites are evaluated for quality, efficiency, capacity, access, and level of utilization. Further, a periodic evaluation of the *CareerLink* system is necessary to ensure quality of service, effectiveness, and efficiency, while employing continuous improvement practices. The PWIB strongly encourages investment in continued development of non-mandated partner relationships to help leverage resources into the *CareerLink* infrastructure.

Discussion:

Comments from and discussions with workforce and economic development stakeholder communities focused on infrastructure investments in the *CareerLink* system and limiting the addition of new sites until a city-wide needs analysis for services is conducted. Particular attention was paid to determining the scope of such an analysis.

Various aspects of the draft policy statement were considered, including the following:

- Components of a comprehensive analysis of the *CareerLink* system;
- Periodic evaluations of the system to ensure quality of service, effectiveness, and efficiency; and
- Leveraging resources into the *CareerLink* system.

It was agreed a quantitative measure of efficiency is a needed addition to the components of an analysis. For example, it was thought that knowing the most effective pathway to employment would be valuable to employer and individual customers, as well as to the overall workforce system.

With regard to periodic evaluations of the system, two factors important to success in that area were identified: 1) implementing a continuous improvement system that is a part of *CareerLink* center operations and 2) assessing and revising the system based upon outcomes.

⁴ Original Draft Policy Statement: The PWIB believes it is necessary to limit establishment of any additional *CareerLink* mini or comprehensive centers until a citywide needs analysis for services is conducted and current sites (*those in operation as well as those under development: Nueva Esperanza, a site in the far Northeast, and a site in West Philadelphia*) are evaluated for quality, capacity, and access. Further, it is believed that a periodic evaluation of the *CareerLink* system is necessary to ensure quality of service, effectiveness, and efficiency, while employing continuous improvement practices. At this time, the PWIB has declined to establish a policy requiring matching funds for sites, but strongly encourages the continued development of non-mandated partner relationship to help leverage resources into the *CareerLink* infrastructure. (*The Workforce Investment Act identifies 12 partners who are mandated to provide services through the local one-stop system. The draft policy statement encourages the expansion of partnerships to include organizations not required by law to be partners in the one-stop system.*)

Additionally, it was recommended a comprehensive marketing plan to employers highlighting the business value of utilizing services of the *CareerLink* system would be instrumental in developing new relationships with private sector employers who might be willing to pay for services.

The discussion concluded by addressing other questions related to infrastructure investments, with one question left for future consideration:

- The amount of investment per center should be based on the needs of the center, emphasizing that one size does not fit all.
- *CareerLink* centers should partner with local community-based organizations to develop synergistic relationships that could result in additional funds leveraged to support the *CareerLink* center.
- Some of the Workforce Investments Act funds should be used as seed money for centers; however, it was agreed additional exploration is necessary before a policy can be developed to guide such investments.

Training Investments

Recommended Policy Statement⁵

Philadelphia's approach to investing its core funds in training should be employer-driven and emphasize outcomes and long-term benefits for individuals, with appropriate focus on economic development and meeting the needs of strategic industry clusters. Further, every effort should be made to maximize all other potential resources for skills training and non-training services to employers and individual customers.

Discussion

Comments from and discussions with workforce and economic development stakeholder communities focused on the ways in which training investments should be guided and maximized.

Language in the original draft policy statement regarding training being employer-driven with an emphasis on outcomes for individuals was affirmed. The descriptor regarding the use of other resources was changed from "exhaust" to "maximize." There was consensus "all other potential resources for training" should include, in addition to traditional public workforce funds, various forms of financial aid, employer tuition assistance programs, and more.

In addition, the importance of long-term economic benefits for individuals serving as one of the drivers for investing in training was reemphasized, and examples such as career advancement, self-sustaining wage, and work supports (such as increased use of the Earned Income Tax Credit) were provided. This portion of the policy statement addresses the continuous effort to maintain the balance between customer choice and strategic impact as areas of focus for training investment.

The original draft policy statement implies *Workforce Investment Act* Title I (WIA) resources should be funds of last resort. There was consensus that the use of WIA Title I funds should be determined on a case-by-case basis, assuming every effort is made to maximize the use of other potential training resources.

In the end, while there was no agreement on the specifics of leveraging core resources, staff should be charged with developing operating guidelines to invest resources to optimize their benefit to employer and individual customers.

⁵ Draft Policy Statement: The PWIB believes Philadelphia's approach to investing its core funds in training should be informed by employer need and emphasize outcomes and long-term benefits for individuals, with appropriate focus on economic development and meeting the needs of the strategic industry clusters. Further, effort should be made to exhaust other potential resources for skills training in an effort to maximize investment in non-training services to employers and individual customers.

Career Development Services

Recommended Policy Statement⁶

Philadelphia's workforce system should maximize **career development services** (job readiness, prescreening, and job matching) with an initial focus on building strategic partnerships to expand the availability of such services. Key to the success of this effort is optimizing relationships with *CareerLink* mandated partners.⁷

Discussion

Comments from and discussions with workforce and economic development stakeholder communities resulted in general agreement with the draft policy statement, with two changes. First, the description "non-training services" was replaced with "**career development services**." Second, a sentence was added to articulate the need to build partnerships with one-stop mandated partners in order to maximize the impact of such services.

With regard to the need to expand the offerings of career development services, other areas in which potential partnerships can be developed were identified and are listed below:

- **Private search and recruitment firms:** Temporary employment agencies and recruitment firms.
- **Social services agencies:** Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare and various organizations with a history of serving people in communities.
- **Community Based Organizations (CBOs):** CBOs can apply to foundations to secure funds to offer career development services in partnership with the *CareerLink* system, for example.
- **Foundations**
- **Other Sources:** Various State and City agencies (PA Dept. of Education, Mayor's Office of Community Services) and educational institutions (The School District of Philadelphia, colleges and universities).

In conclusion, there was consensus on the need to balance "front-end" services (job readiness, pre-screening, etc.) and "back-end" services (job retention and career advancement). However, in times of limited resources, it was agreed it is more beneficial to employer and individual customers to focus investments on front-end career development services.

⁶ Draft Policy Statement: The PWIB believes Philadelphia's workforce system should maximize non-training services with an initial focus on building strategic partnerships to expand the availability of such services.

⁷ The *Workforce Investment Act* identifies twelve partners who are mandated to provide services through the local one-stop system.