

IT TAKES A COMMUNITY

Ensuring WIOA Planning & Implementation Lead to Greater Economic Opportunity for Adults & Youth Facing Chronic Unemployment

October 2015, Policy Advocacy Brief

Every person deserves the opportunity to succeed in work and support themselves and their families—yet millions of adults and youth nationwide face barriers to employment that put them at risk of experiencing the devastating effects of chronic unemployment and poverty.

Under the newly-passed Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the public workforce system aims to increase employment and economic opportunity for jobseekers facing barriers to employment. WIOA's implementation offers numerous opportunities that local communities and states can leverage to help ensure that public systems meet the workforce needs and interests of jobseekers facing barriers to employment.

Leveraging these opportunities will require concerted and deliberate efforts by a range of stakeholders, including advocates, community-based service providers, public system leaders, philanthropy, and researchers. In particular, because public systems are better at solving big problems when they work together, these stakeholders will need to act in partnership with each other and across public systems.

This brief and the [WIOA Planning & Implementation Toolkit](#) provide advocates, community-based service providers, public system leaders, philanthropy, and researchers with practical and actionable recommendations for leveraging WIOA's state and local planning processes, and other opportunities embedded in the legislation, to increase employment and economic opportunity for adults and youth facing barriers to employment.

HEARTLAND ALLIANCE
NATIONAL INITIATIVES

**WIOA PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION
TOOLKIT**

Report Information

Project team: Leiha Edmonds, Caitlin C. Schnur, Amy Rynell, Chris Warland, Annika Yates, Melissa Young

Writers: Melissa Young

Editors: Caitlin C. Schnur, Amy Rynell, Chris Warland

Primary author: Melissa Young

Report design: Caitlin C. Schnur

Suggested citation: Young, M. (2015). *It takes a community: Ensuring WIOA planning & implementation lead to greater economic opportunity for adults & youth facing chronic unemployment*. Chicago, IL: Heartland Alliance's National Initiatives on Poverty & Economic Opportunity.

National Initiatives on Poverty & Economic Opportunity

Heartland Alliance's National Initiatives on Poverty & Economic Opportunity is dedicated to ending chronic unemployment and poverty. We believe that every person deserves the opportunity to succeed in work and support themselves and their families. Through our field building, we provide support and guidance that fosters more effective and sustainable employment efforts. Our policy and advocacy work advances solutions to the systemic issues that drive chronic unemployment.

Our national initiatives include:

The National Transitional Jobs Network (NTJN)

The National Center on Employment & Homelessness (NCEH)

Black Men Overcoming Barriers & Realizing Employment (B.MORE) Initiative

Table of Contents

Report Information	02
Introduction	05
WIOA: A Catalyst to Address the Employment Needs of Adult and Youth Jobseekers Facing Barriers to Employment Nationwide	07
How This Brief and Toolkit are Organized	09
I. Goal 1: Leverage Data and Information Effectively to Identify the Scope, Scale, and Needs of Adult and Youth Jobseekers Facing Barriers to Employment	10
Actions and Strategies for Advocates	11
Actions and Strategies for Community-Based Service Providers	12
Actions and Strategies for Public System Leaders	13
Actions and Strategies for Philanthropy	13
Actions and Strategies for Researchers	14
II. Goal 2: Align Resources and Strategies with the Needs of Adult and Youth Jobseekers Facing Barriers to Employment and Evidence-Based and Promising Solutions	15
Actions and Strategies for Advocates	16
Actions and Strategies for Community-Based Service Providers	17
Actions and Strategies for Public System Leaders	18
Actions and Strategies for Philanthropy	19
Actions and Strategies for Researchers	20
III. Goal 3: Plan and Partner Effectively to Maximize Resources & Leverage Strengths	21
Actions and Strategies for Advocates	23
Actions and Strategies for Community-Based Service Providers	24
Actions and Strategies for Public System Leaders	25
Actions and Strategies for Philanthropy	26
Actions and Strategies for Researchers	27

Table of Contents, continued

- IV. Goal 4: Create Accountability Mechanisms, Evaluate Efforts, and Periodically Revisit Goals for Serving the Employment Needs of Adults and Youth Facing Barriers 28**
 - Actions and Strategies for Advocates 29
 - Actions and Strategies for Community-Based Service Providers..... 30
 - Actions and Strategies for Public System Leaders 30
 - Actions and Strategies for Philanthropy 32
 - Actions and Strategies for Researchers..... 32

- Conclusion 33**

- References & Icon Attribution..... 34**

Published: October 2015

This report is available online at: <http://nationalinitiatives.issuelab.org/home>

Introduction

Millions of Americans face barriers to employment success as a result of human capital, health, situational, and structural barriers to employment. These barriers can include having little or no work history, low-educational attainment or literacy, poor health or disabilities, lack of transportation, lack of stable housing or child care, discrimination, having a criminal record, and many others.

The number of adults and youth who are chronically unemployed as a result of these and other barriers to employment represents a tremendous and nationwide loss of productivity, economic growth, and human potential. Chronic unemployment has devastating effects on individual and family health and well-being, erodes dignity and self-confidence, and is associated with poorer academic performance among children. Communities with a higher-share of long-term unemployed workers also tend to have higher rates of crime and violence.¹ Youth who are disconnected from work and school, known as opportunity youth, represent an estimated cost to society of upwards of \$250 billion per year, or a loss of \$4.7 trillion over the lifetime of an opportunity youth cohort.² Being out of work for six months or more is associated with lower well-being among the long-term unemployed, their families, and communities.³ Unemployment leads to higher expenditures for unemployment benefits, food assistance, and health care, among other public benefits.⁴ When individuals are chronically unemployed, local, state, and federal governments forgo significant tax revenue in the form of income, property, and goods and services taxes.

When given the opportunity to work, the vast majority of individuals who face chronic unemployment do so and many more consistently say that employment is a primary need and goal.^{5,6} Stable employment reduces reliance on public benefits and decreases poverty. Engagement in employment has been shown to help prevent youth most at risk of involvement in the criminal justice system from entering in the first place and decreases criminal justice recidivism, especially among individuals who are most at risk of returning to incarceration.^{7,8} Youth employment has many positive ripple effects, including the potential to create pipelines to further education and training.⁹ Among low-income noncustodial parents, access to work has been shown to lead to greater parental engagement in the form of higher and more consistent child support payments and informal support.¹⁰ Children whose parents are engaged in the labor market have been shown to be more successful in school and to exhibit more pro-social behavior and attitudes towards work.¹¹

Many federal and state public systems and funding streams that target individuals and families living in poverty aim to increase employment and economic opportunity among the individuals served, many of whom face barriers to employment. Given resource and expertise limitations, however, no public system can increase employment and economic opportunity for adults and youth facing barriers to employment single-handedly. Workforce, education, training, and support services can be leveraged through several federal and state

Introduction, continued

funding streams and systems, often with significant discretion with regard to the types of workforce services and supports offered and target populations. Indeed, multiple public systems and funding streams comprise the full spectrum of available workforce services in the United States. In addition to services administered under the U.S. Department of Labor, other systems and services that can be leveraged to fund and administer employment services for people facing barriers to employment include: employment and education services through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T), the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, the criminal justice and juvenile justice systems, the foster care system, veterans employment services, and others.

Increasing employment and economic opportunity for adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment requires the efforts of a wide range of stakeholders, including advocates, community-based service providers, public system leaders, philanthropy, researchers, employers, and many others. Aligning and leveraging partners and systems to achieve these goals requires dedicated efforts and a reason to come to the table. The passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is that reason—and can catalyze communities and states to address the employment needs of jobseekers facing barriers.

WIOA: A Catalyst to Address the Employment Needs of Adult and Youth Jobseekers Facing Barriers to Employment Nationwide

The passage and implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) has the potential to catalyze efforts in local communities and states to address the employment needs and interests of a greater share of adults and youth facing barriers to employment and to develop a more comprehensive and aligned public workforce system to meet these jobseekers' needs.

WIOA modernizes the federal framework that guides America's public workforce system. The statute prioritizes and acknowledges the need for workforce services and supports for adults and youth facing barriers to employment to a greater degree than its predecessor, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). WIOA also provides flexibility to implement promising practices for connecting chronically unemployed individuals to work. **The statute articulates that one of the goals of the public workforce system is to prepare individuals—especially individuals facing barriers to employment—to succeed in the labor market through increased access to employment opportunities, education, training, and support services.**¹² Subsequent federal guidance instructs the system to prioritize and direct resources to serve low-income adults and out-of-school youth.¹³

Realizing the goals of increased access to employment, training, education, and support services on behalf of adults and youth facing barriers to employment will require concerted and deliberate efforts by local communities and states. These efforts may be a new, expanded, or renewed undertaking. Moreover, state and local infrastructures, data systems, and public system staff knowledge and capacity may be limited to carry out these processes, because it has been nearly 20 years since America's public workforce system has intentionally focused on increasing employment and economic opportunity for low-income individuals and jobseekers facing barriers to employment.¹⁴

Fortunately, the required functions of state and local workforce governance boards, strategic and operational elements of WIOA state and local planning processes, and the process of creating a WIOA plan itself can spur efforts in communities to ensure that jobseekers facing barriers to employment are accounted for and their needs addressed.

WIOA: A Catalyst, continued

Diverse stakeholders who recognize why it's important and necessary to increase employment and economic opportunity among these jobseekers can contribute, guide, support, and enrich communities' efforts to realize WIOA's goals. Indeed, stakeholders such as advocates, community-based service organizations, public system leaders, philanthropy, and researchers can influence the WIOA planning process. Many of these stakeholders are likely to understand the needs of adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment and how the workforce system can support these jobseekers.

That said, interviews with many of these stakeholders led by Heartland Alliance's National Initiatives team—coupled with our years of experience working to advance employment and economic opportunity for jobseekers facing barriers to employment—reinforce that stakeholders need ideas for how they can leverage their unique roles within the WIOA planning and implementation process to shape the system.

This brief and the [**WIOA Planning & Implementation Toolkit**](#) provide stakeholders with ideas and actionable recommendations for helping to ensure that the public workforce system under WIOA increases employment and economic opportunity for jobseekers facing barriers to employment.

How Does WIOA Define Individuals Facing Barriers to Employment?

Under WIOA, the term “individual with a barrier to employment” means a member of one or more of the following populations:

- displaced homemakers;
- low-income individuals;
- Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians;
- individuals with disabilities, including youth;
- older individuals;
- ex-offenders;
- homeless individuals or homeless children and youths;
- youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system.
- individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers;
- eligible migrant and seasonal farm workers;
- individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF, or welfare);
- single parents, including single pregnant women;
- long-term unemployed individuals;
- other groups, as determined by the Governor.

How This Brief and Toolkit are Organized

Heartland Alliance's National Initiatives on Poverty & Economic Opportunity believes that four goals should drive state and local efforts focused on ensuring that a greater share of adults and youth facing barriers can access and succeed in employment. These goals underlie this brief and help to organize its recommendations. The four goals are:

Goal 1: States and communities should seek to **leverage data and information** effectively to identify the scope, scale, and needs of adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment.

Goal 2: States and communities should seek to **align resources and strategies** with the needs of adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment and evidence-based and promising solutions.

Goal 3: State and local public systems should **plan and partner effectively** to maximize resources and leverage strengths.

Goal 4: States and communities should **create accountability mechanisms, evaluate efforts, and periodically revisit goals** for serving the employment needs of adults and youth facing barriers.

Under each of these goals, this brief offers ideas and actionable recommendations for advocates, community-based service providers, public system leaders, philanthropy, and researchers to get involved in WIOA planning processes. Although these distinct roles may be arbitrary in some communities or may not exist entirely, readers should consider how they can advance this brief's recommendations while leveraging the strengths of organizations and stakeholders in their community to achieve the four goals outlined above.

Throughout this brief there are links to practical tools stakeholders can use to support their efforts as well as additional recommendations. The **WIOA Planning & Implementation Toolkit** webpage also offers resources to support stakeholders in advancing these goals.

WIOA state and local planning efforts are one way the public workforce system can chart pathways toward employment and economic opportunity for adults and youth facing chronic unemployment. State Governors' discretionary resources can be another. Here are some ideas for how the Governor's WIOA Discretionary Fund could be used to support the employment needs of people facing chronic unemployment.

Goal 1: Leverage Data and Information Effectively to Identify the Scope, Scale, and Needs of Adult and Youth Jobseekers Facing Barriers to Employment.

To offer appropriate workforce service and supports to jobseekers facing barriers to employment, states and communities must understand the scope, scale, and needs of these jobseekers. WIOA planning offers an opportunity for stakeholders to gather data about these jobseekers' employment and service needs, characteristics, and public system interaction. This section offers stakeholders actionable recommendations for helping to ensure that the data contributing to community analyses required under WIOA are comprehensive.

For communities to offer workforce services and supports that meet the needs and interests of adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment, allocate resources effectively, and form appropriate partnerships, states and communities first must understand the scope, scale, and needs of these jobseekers.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires that state and local planning efforts include and be informed by an analysis of various data, including data on the education and skill levels of people facing barriers to employment.¹⁵ Meeting this requirement is an opportunity for communities and states to go beyond just taking stock of these jobseekers' education and skill levels and, in addition, to gather data and information about these jobseekers' employment and service needs, characteristics, and public system interaction.

To shape decision making that is based on an accurate, comprehensive picture of adults and youth facing barriers to employment, advocates, community-based service organizations, public system leaders, philanthropy, and researchers can help ensure that the data and information contributing to community analyses are comprehensive.

Key Question:

Does my community have a good grasp on the scope, scale, and workforce interests and needs of adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment?



Advocates

Make it a priority for the WIOA planning process to be designed around the needs and interests of adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment in your community.

For the WIOA system to effectively serve adults and youth facing barriers to employment, communities must assemble an accurate picture of these jobseekers' needs. The data analysis requirements embedded in WIOA planning processes can provide advocates with a unique opportunity to understand the workforce and service needs of adults and youth facing barriers to employment. This information can shed light on the scope and scale of need among these jobseekers as well as which public systems these jobseekers currently access. The data and information gathered through this process can also inform or spark state and local policy advocacy efforts on behalf of people facing barriers to employment, such as ban the box campaigns, discharge planning that includes employment, or campaigns to help ensure people experiencing homelessness can access identification.

Making the Case: Why the Public Workforce System Should Prioritize Jobseekers Facing Barriers to Employment

This resource can help advocates make the case for the public workforce system to prioritize and serve populations facing barriers to employment.

- Advocates should ask state and local WIOA planning boards and city, county, and state agency leaders or chief elected officials to the board about data analysis processes underway. If necessary, advocates should encourage leaders to go beyond simply identifying the education and skill levels of jobseekers facing barriers to employment and, in addition, to capture the characteristics and needs of adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment. Examples of these jobseekers' characteristics and needs that communities may want to ascertain include having a criminal record or involvement in the juvenile justice system, experiencing unstable housing, receiving public assistance, or other employment barriers. Advocates should urge that existing or to-be formed WIOA planning workgroups help ensure that this data collection process is carried out effectively and that these data are made publicly available to inform future policy and planning efforts.
- If public system infrastructure or capacity is too limited to carry out a robust data analysis and information gathering process, advocates should help identify other stakeholders who can support this effort and leverage the recommendations in this brief to see the process through. These stakeholders could include researchers, data miners, community college or university faculty, applied research centers, policy analysts, and community-based organizations, among others.
- Finally, to the extent that a local area has existing analyses related to the education, skill levels, and workforce needs of youth and adults facing barriers to employment, advocates should encourage local plan developers to use these existing data to make informed decisions. WIOA law and guidance allow and encourage these existing analyses to be used to shape local plans. In the longer term, advocates should encourage their state and local communities to mandate that the public workforce system regularly collect data and information about the characteristics of jobseekers facing barriers to employment and encourage efforts to share data across public systems. Regular data collection and sharing will help drive informed decision making in the future.



Community-Based Service Providers

Adults and youth facing barriers to employment are a critical source of authentic lived experience that should be incorporated into the process of making informed decisions about the workforce services and supports needed in communities.

Ensure that authentic perspectives from adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment and front-line workforce staff contribute to the analysis. Adults and youth facing barriers to employment are a critical source of authentic lived experience that should be incorporated into the process of making informed decisions about the workforce services and supports needed in communities. Moreover, front-line workforce staff can offer a wealth of information about the characteristics of jobseekers seeking workforce services as well as successes and challenges in serving these jobseekers. As a trusted partner in communities and among jobseekers facing barriers to employment, community-based service providers can help identify participants and staff to ensure that these voices are heard and can help shape the discussion.

- Community-based service providers should first inquire about what processes are in place by public workforce system leaders to obtain information from adults or youth facing barriers to employment and frontline staff. If there are no processes in place, community-based service providers should offer to partner with local public workforce system leaders and WIOA planners to gather this information by convening and hosting focus groups, interviews, or other information-gathering processes with youth and adults facing barriers to employment and front-line staff. In local areas where there are multiple community-based service providers offering employment services to adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers, these organizations should partner to host and share their and their participants' experiences.
- Community-based service providers should view their involvement in state and local plan development as an ongoing education effort. WIOA local plans must be reviewed every two years, so community-based providers will have other opportunities to continue to educate the system on the employment needs of participants in local communities. Leaders of community-based organizations serving the employment and support service needs of adults or youth facing barriers to employment should build a relationship with WIOA local leaders and chief elected officials and seek out opportunities to educate them on an ongoing basis.

Participant Service Mapping

One way to gather front-line staff input is to implement a discovery process in which front-line workforce staff track their participants' entry, success, and setbacks in getting and keeping employment and report back to public workforce system plan developers.

City-level task forces have used these service "maps" to help identify challenges to getting and keeping employment among populations of jobseekers facing barriers to employment and to help determine a menu of needed employment services and supports.



Public System Leaders

Support data analysis efforts, allocate staff time, and convene leaders as necessary to ascertain information about the needs of jobseekers facing barriers to employment. It is in the best interest of the public workforce system and multiple public system leaders—especially leaders from the public systems that are required partners of the WIOA system—to engage in a robust data analysis process that goes beyond simply gathering the employment and skill levels of individuals facing barriers to employment. Because available funds for WIOA services have not increased, the WIOA system can benefit from leveraging data about the characteristics and needs of jobseekers in order to inform how the system might prioritize adult and youth jobseekers with the most need for services, use resources efficiently, and partner with other systems.

- Public workforce and other system leaders—specifically state and local WIOA boards and chief elected officials, Governor’s and Mayor’s offices, and city and state agency leaders—should support the data analysis requirements within the WIOA plan development. These stakeholders should urge the system to unpack the characteristics of jobseekers facing barriers to employment through some of the processes discussed here and designate staff and internal capacity to solicit data and information from a wide variety of sources.
- These leaders should establish and/or leverage specific planning workgroups tasked with assembling an accurate picture of the needs of adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment. Especially for state and local public systems that have decreased data and research capacity, public system leaders should seek out and partner with the stakeholders described in this section.



Philanthropy

Support data-informed WIOA planning and decision making now and in the future. Philanthropy is uniquely positioned to shepherd data and information-driven decision making to inform WIOA planning and ensure that the system and state and local planning efforts are accountable to the needs of adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment now and in the future.

- Philanthropy can increase the capacity of public systems to carry out time-limited data and information analysis processes by directly funding projects that bring together data and research experts and public system leaders toward the goal of ensuring that WIOA’s planning processes take into consideration the needs of adults and youth facing barriers to employment as described in this brief.
- Philanthropy can leverage its ability to bring public system leaders and other partners together, such as those described in this section, to ensure that the data analysis functions of the WIOA planning process reflect the considerations posed here.
- Long term, philanthropy can help seed and nurture interest in lasting public data system improvements by supporting advocacy efforts that spur data and information management sharing projects that aim to increase efficiency among public systems.



Researchers

Researchers can help identify and shape the most appropriate questions and considerations that public system leaders ought to be considering as it relates to understanding the needs of jobseekers facing barriers to employment in their communities.

Support the identification and analysis of data from multiple sources to make informed decisions. Researchers, data miners, university faculty, or applied research centers can be a valuable resource to state and local public workforce system leaders and WIOA planners, particularly in geographies where public system capacity is limited.

- Researchers can help identify and shape the most appropriate questions and considerations that public system leaders ought to be considering as it relates to understanding the needs of adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment in their communities. Along with other questions, it may be appropriate to gather information that identifies and maps the prevalence, employment history, potential employment barriers, education, skills, and interaction with other public systems of adults and youth facing barriers to employment.
- Researchers can support the public workforce leaders in accessing and thoroughly reviewing their existing public workforce system intake and exit data to ascertain the characteristics of jobseekers currently being served by the public workforce system, the system's success in serving these jobseekers and/or what services are being accessed, and what more might be needed.
- Researchers can support obtaining and analyzing data beyond what is available through the public workforce system, such as data from other public systems and public sources. Because people facing barriers to employment often engage with multiple public systems—and because many data indicators such as the prevalence of homelessness or a criminal record are self-reported by jobseekers and often times are not mandated to be collected—, assembling an accurate picture of the employment barriers and needs of jobseekers facing barriers to employment will likely require examining data from multiple sources. Data available through State departments administering human services, housing and homeless service systems, adult and juvenile corrections, veterans services, and child welfare services, among others, may be valuable. Moreover, leveraging data from other public sources can help identify trends that can shed light on potential barriers to employment faced by populations in specific geographic areas.

Goal 2: Align Resources and Strategies with the Needs of Adult and Youth Jobseekers Facing Barriers to Employment and Evidence-Based and Promising Solutions.

WIOA planning and implementation requirements can spur a community asset assessment process that examines available workforce services for jobseekers facing barriers to employment, the degree to which services reflect evidence-based and promising practices, and potential service gaps. This section offers stakeholders actionable recommendations for helping the public workforce system to assess and align workforce services for jobseekers facing barriers and to promote evidence-based employment practices.

Multiple organizations and public agencies in communities may offer workforce services and supports for adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment. How successful these jobseekers will be in finding, keeping, and advancing in employment depends in large part on the degree to which available workforce development services are well-resourced, meet their needs and interests, are geographically accessible, and align with best and promising practices.

For decision makers to identify the workforce services and supports they might offer, or develop, to meet the needs and interests of jobseekers facing barriers to employment, they must understand the needs of these jobseekers in the community, the degree to which providers currently meet those needs, and whether services reflect evidence-based and promising practices. With this information, decision makers can determine workforce service shortages or misalignment.

This type of assessment and alignment process is consistent with the functions of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) state boards and WIOA planning. For example, one of the roles of the WIOA state board is to support the Governor in developing and implementing career pathways in local areas by aligning the employment, training, education, and support services needed by adults and youth facing barriers to employment.¹⁶

Key Question:

Do my community's available workforce services and supports for adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment meet their needs?

These side-by-side guides describe the functions of state and local WIOA governance boards & strategic and operational elements that every state and local WIOA plan must contain.

In addition, to support informed decision making about communities' workforce services offerings, WIOA planning requires communities to engage in an assessment or "gap analysis" process. For example, to drive the strategy behind state and local WIOA plans and implementation, the public workforce system is required to assess current workforce development activities for their strengths and weaknesses as well as the state and local capacity to provide these activities.¹⁷ WIOA state and local plans require a description of this analysis.

Within local WIOA plans specifically, local boards are required to describe how they plan to expand access to employment, training, education, and support services for individuals facing barriers to employment.¹⁸ The local public workforce system is also responsible for identifying and promoting evidence-based strategies for meeting the needs of jobseekers facing barriers.¹⁹

Taken together, these requirements can spur a community asset assessment process that examines the available workforce services and supports for jobseekers facing barriers to employment; the state and local capacity to deliver these services; potential service gaps; and the degree to which these services reflect evidence-based and promising employment practices. This assessment process can also identify what more communities might offer to jobseekers facing barriers to employment.

Advocates, community-based service organizations, public system leaders, philanthropy and researchers can help support the public workforce system in this assessment and alignment process as well as support the identification and promotion of evidence-based employment practices.



Advocates

Urge that assessment and alignment processes are conducted in partnership with a variety of stakeholders and get involved in the process. To conduct a robust assessment process of available and needed workforce services in the community, it's necessary to roll out many feedback mechanisms that will reach a diversity of stakeholders. Advocates are uniquely positioned to support the roll out of such processes and ensure that a variety of stakeholders weigh in.

- First, state and local advocates should inquire about potential workforce service assessment processes already being conducted by public workforce system leaders or WIOA planning committees. In many communities, advocates should direct this inquiry to workforce board leaders at the city or county level and/or staff that may be designated to support WIOA planning functions. Advocates should assess the degree to which these assessment projects are gathering input from various

Community Asset Mapping

This resource offers questions that communities might use to assess workforce services and gaps in services for populations facing barriers to employment in their community.

Advocates should urge WIOA planners and decision makers to gather and catalogue evidence-based and promising practices for serving jobseekers facing barriers to employment.

public systems that offer workforce services, community-based service providers, and adult and youth jobseekers themselves. When necessary, advocates should urge decision makers to partner with stakeholders to develop and roll out input and feedback processes.

- Advocates can also play a unique role in rolling out public feedback processes. Specifically, advocates should leverage existing coalitions, member organizations, and other community groups to promote and participate in public feedback processes, host public feedback meetings, and help develop and/or organize community-based organizations and participants to share their perspectives about the strengths and weaknesses of available workforce services and what more might be needed in communities.
- Finally, advocates should urge WIOA planners and decision makers to gather and catalogue evidence-based and promising practices and to look to other states for innovative initiatives. Advocates should urge the creation of a publicly-available menu of potential workforce services and best and promising practices for serving jobseekers facing barriers to employment that could be implemented by the public workforce system directly or through partnerships with other public systems and stakeholders.



**Community-Based
Service Providers**

Be at the assessment and planning table, contribute, and help ensure that diverse stakeholders weigh in.

Because many community-based service providers implement workforce and other support services for adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment, they have an important role to play in ensuring that workforce services available in communities align with the needs of jobseekers, service gaps, and promising solutions.

- First, community-based service providers should approach public workforce system leaders—either at the city, county, or appropriate local workforce board level—and ask to be involved with planning efforts aimed at assessing available workforce resources for jobseekers facing barrier to employment in the community. This is especially important as it relates to identifying available workforce services offered, existing capacity, needs, and best and promising practices. Specifically, local workforce boards have the option of including representatives of

Local workforce boards have the option of including representatives of community-based organizations that have demonstrated experience and expertise in serving adults and youth facing barriers to employment on planning bodies, but the onus will likely be on community-based service organizations to approach local public workforce system leaders, ask to be part of leadership bodies, and share their experience.

Community-based service providers can ensure that the perspectives of jobseekers facing barriers are part of the WIOA planning conversation by convening participants to share their experiences accessing workforce services and what they need to be successful in work.

community-based organizations that have demonstrated experience and expertise in serving adults and youth facing barriers to employment on planning bodies, but the onus will likely be on community-based service organizations to approach local public workforce system leaders, ask to be part of leadership bodies, and share their experience.

- Community-based service providers should also engage local workforce boards and planning committees with the offer to coordinate with other local providers to gather and report on the degree to which available workforce services reflect jobseekers' needs and promising solutions as well as where there are service gaps. Community-based organizations can host meetings or public comment sessions in partnership with other community-based organizations, public workforce system, planning boards, advocates, and researchers to discuss workforce services available, target population groups, geography, needs, and capacity.
- Finally, community-based service providers can ensure that the perspectives of jobseekers facing barriers to employment are part of the planning conversation by offering to convene feedback processes such as focus groups, public comment sessions, and site visits in which participants can share their experiences in accessing workforce services and supports and what they need to be successful in work. If community-based service providers aspire to do this, they should take time to educate participants about the WIOA planning process and prepare participants to share their experiences.



**Public System
Leaders**

Leverage the WIOA planning process to gather a comprehensive view of workforce services, capacity, and need in the community in order to inform partnerships and planning. Public leaders from a number of state and local agencies and administering programs should seize the opportunity to assess and align workforce services for adults and youth facing barriers to employment and get involved in the WIOA planning process. This is especially important for the state and local public systems and programs named as “required partners” in WIOA statute, including but not limited to:

- human services, corrections, and housing and homeless service agencies under state and local Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs;
- Second Chance Act programs, specifically the REO (formally REXO) program; and
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) employment and training activities, including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, Continuum of Care, Family Self-Sufficiency program, Jobs Plus program, and the Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency program.²⁰

Where's the Money?: Federal Employment and Training Funding Sources

***This resource
includes a partial list
of federal funding
sources that can be
leveraged to fund
employment and
training services and
supports.***

Under WIOA requirements, these and other required and/or optional partners will be responsible for providing access to the programs or activities under their jurisdiction through the one-stop delivery system. They will also be responsible for working collaboratively with the state and local WIOA boards to establish and maintain the one-stop delivery system, which includes funding the one-stop system's infrastructure and participation in the system's operation.ⁱ MOU agreements between the WIOA system and other public systems in local communities will detail the specifics of these partnerships, but public system leaders should get involved early to ensure that the planning process is mutually beneficial for all public agency entities and jobseekers facing barriers to employment.

- First, public system and state and local leaders and planners should inquire with city and state WIOA governance board leaders—including the chief elected official, Mayor, and Governor's office—about how the WIOA planning process may be rolled out within the state and local context. Public system leaders should also inquire about the specific partners engaged to ensure that the perspectives and workforce services of the public systems and programs under their jurisdiction are taken into account. If public systems and partners are not currently at the WIOA planning table, now is the time to inquire about representation.
- Public system leaders should approach such an assessment or “gap analysis” process knowing the workforce and support services and programs offered under their jurisdiction, what services are offered where, eligible populations for services and populations currently served, the potential unmet needs of participants served, and how WIOA services could enhance current service offerings.



Philanthropy

Support alignment in workforce strategies and supports and spur adoption of evidence-based and promising practices. Philanthropy can help shepherd efforts to assess and align available workforce services by leveraging their influence as a convener and funding discrete “gap analysis” or community asset assessment projects.

- Philanthropy can work to convene stakeholders—including state and local leaders from public systems that may offer employment and support services, WIOA leaders, and other community-based service partners—to assess and map available services and supports through the processes described in this brief or other processes communities identify. Philanthropy can also play an important role in funding discrete system

ⁱ In addition to the core programs, required partners include the Senior Community Service Employment Program; job counseling, training, and placement services for veterans authorized under chapter 41 of title 38; career and technical postsecondary education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006; Trade Adjustment Assistance Programs; employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) employment and training programs; Unemployment Compensation programs; programs authorized under the Second Chance Act of 2007, Section 212 (reintegration of ex-offenders); and programs authorized under the Social Security Act Title IV, Part A (TANF), unless the Governor determines that TANF is not a required partner. Optional partners may include, with the approval of the local board and chief elected officials, the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) employment and training program (i.e. Ticket to Work programs); Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP) employment and training programs; the Vocational Rehabilitation Client Assistance Program; National and Community Service Act Programs; and other employment, education or training programs such as those operated by libraries or in the private sector.

Philanthropy can catalyze greater adoption of identified evidence-based and promising practices by funding pilot projects that bring public systems together to implement innovative workforce approaches for populations facing chronic unemployment.



Researchers

analysis projects in which many feedback mechanisms are implemented in partnership with the public workforce system and stakeholders discussed here.

- To spur the identification and adoption of evidence-based and promising practices for serving jobseekers facing barriers to employment, philanthropy can host information-gathering and feedback events to solicit input from a variety of stakeholders. Philanthropy can also bring local, state, and national experts together to educate stakeholders on evidence-based and promising employment solutions and initiatives for meeting these jobseekers' employment needs. Finally, philanthropy can catalyze greater adoption of identified evidence-based and promising practices by funding pilot projects that bring public systems together to implement innovative workforce approaches for populations facing chronic unemployment, track implementation, and share lessons learned.
- Finally, to the degree to which service gaps are identified in the community, philanthropy can play an important role in promoting innovation in workforce development strategies, responding to emerging workforce services trends, and helping to fund and demonstrate what works in order to spread evidence-based practice.

Help develop quality feedback mechanisms, analyze data, and ensure that evidence-based and promising solutions are identified.

Researchers are uniquely positioned to work with public workforce system leaders and WIOA planners to assess the community's available workforce services and needs.

- Researchers, data miners, university faculty, and applied research centers can help develop and execute public feedback mechanisms to identify, catalogue, and map workforce activities and supports available in the community, paying special attention to what services are offered, how many people are served, partner capacity, and missing or needed services, among other factors.
- In particular, researchers can help design electronic surveys and focus group questions, lead focus groups, design, develop and conduct stakeholder interviews, and leverage crowdsourcing techniques to ascertain this information. As discussed in this section, advocates and community-based service providers can support and amplify these efforts. Researchers can also support robust analysis of gathered information and develop reports to help drive public system decision making.
- Finally, researchers can help identify and distill evidence-based and promising employment solutions and innovative initiatives for meeting the employment needs of jobseekers facing barriers by conducting literature reviews, scanning state and local workforce programs, and engaging with experts.

Goal 3: Plan and Partner Effectively to Maximize Resources & Leverage Strengths.

To meet the needs of jobseekers facing barriers to employment, the public workforce system and the agencies and systems that make up the nation's workforce and support services must leverage their resources intentionally. WIOA offers states the flexibility to develop Combined State Plans to guide their public workforce system in coordination with other public systems and partners. This section offers stakeholders actionable recommendations for helping to support WIOA combined state planning efforts and to ensure that planning processes lead to employment success for jobseekers facing barriers.

To meet the employment and service needs of the diverse range of jobseekers facing barriers to employment, the public workforce system and the many agencies and systems that comprise the nation's workforce and support services must leverage their strengths and resources in intentional ways.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) statute offers states the flexibility to develop Combined State Plans to guide their public workforce system in coordination with a number of public systems and partners. Effective joint planning processes among public systems can go a long way toward:

- ensuring the identification, offering, and implementing of a robust menu of employment and support services for adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment;
- identifying and implementing effective referral processes between the public workforce and other public system partners;
- identifying new or expanded workforce and support service resources;
- using existing resources wisely and most effectively; and
- seeding innovative system coordination approaches to increase the likelihood that adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment can access and receive appropriate workforce services.

Key Question:

In what ways can combined state planning efforts benefit adults and youth facing chronic unemployment in my state?

Developing a Combined State Plan is a unique opportunity to ensure that the public workforce system under WIOA accounts for and addresses the employment interests and needs of jobseekers facing barriers to employment.

At minimum, states must develop joint plans with WIOA core programs through the state's unified planning process.ⁱⁱ States may choose to develop Combined State Plans, which offers a unique opportunity to ensure that the public workforce system under WIOA accounts for and addresses the employment interests and needs of jobseekers facing barriers. Combined State Plans should include the WIOA core programs and one or more other public systems including:

- the state Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program;
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training (SNAP E&T);
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) employment and training activities, including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, Continuum of Care, Family Self-Sufficiency program, Jobs Plus program, and the Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency program;²¹
- Community Services Block Grant employment and training activities; and/or
- Second Chance Act reentry programs, including the REO (formerly REXO) program, among others.

Advocates, community-based service organizations, public system leaders, philanthropy, and researchers can all play a role in supporting WIOA planning efforts—and especially combined state planning efforts—and making sure that WIOA planning processes lead to greater access to and success in employment for adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers.

Seeding Innovative System Coordination Approaches Through Effective Joint Planning Processes:

Examples of innovative system coordination approaches to increase the likelihood that jobseekers facing barriers to employment can access and receive workforce services may include coordinated access and assessment processes, co-location of services, and the use of employment navigators, among other strategies.

ⁱⁱ WIOA includes six core programs: Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth formula grants under Title I; adult education state grants under Title II; Wagner-Peyser Employment Services under Title III; and vocational rehabilitation state grants under Title IV.



Advocates

Make it a priority that your state engage in combined state WIOA planning. On its own, the WIOA system cannot accomplish the goal of increasing access to employment, education, training, and support services for adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment. Advocates should make it a priority that their state engage in WIOA combined state planning efforts. Advocates should also encourage state agency leaders and WIOA planners to engage a range of stakeholders—including relevant state agency leaders, community-based service organizations, adult and youth jobseekers, among others—in the processes for developing the Combined State Plan.

- It is in the best interest of public systems that are named as required WIOA partners to be involved in combined state planning processes. Advocates should be strategic about encouraging combined state planning with one or more of these required partners and other state agencies and programs by leveraging relationships with agency leaders, urging participation, and educating relevant public system leaders about the opportunities embedded in combined state planning efforts and required partners' responsibilities. In particular, advocates should consider the specific populations of jobseekers who have been identified through the data analysis processes outlined in this brief, and which public systems these jobseekers likely access, and urge leaders in those public agencies to get involved in order to increase access to supports and workforce services for these jobseekers.

Combined State Planning Could Help Expand Best and Promising Workforce Strategies

The WIOA and TANF systems allow for transitional jobs and subsidized employment to be implemented with available funds.

Evaluation evidence shows that these programs have a positive social and economic impact. These programs can significantly raise individual and family earnings, create pathways to jobs, benefit employers on a number of measures, and have positive economic ripple effects in communities. Research findings have also demonstrated that these programs can contribute to lowering recidivism, reducing public benefits receipt, and improving children's lives. Finally, research shows that the financial benefits of these programs far outweigh the costs.

The TANF system has recent experience implementing and scaling these interventions for the benefit of many low-income populations, including youth and adults. Combined state planning between the WIOA and TANF systems could help maximize the use of resources and expertise to implement this workforce strategy.

Advocates should find out about how the WIOA planning process will be structured, the timeline, and who will be responsible for shepherding the process and documenting the plan.

- Advocates should inquire with state WIOA planning leaders—including heads of state agencies, state workforce board designees, and the Governor’s office—about how the planning process will be structured, the timeline, and who will be responsible for shepherding the process and documenting the plan. If the stakeholders discussed in this brief are not involved, advocates should consider urging their involvement to ensure that the planning process takes the ideas discussed here into consideration.
- Advocates should inquire about the timing and frequency of public comment opportunities with state WIOA planning groups as state plans develop. WIOA statute and guidance from the U.S Department of Labor has urged that WIOA planning processes be transparent and offer multiple opportunities for stakeholders to weigh in.²² In preparation for public comment opportunities, advocates should educate stakeholders in their network about the planning process, activate partners to weigh in directly, and/or host sessions to gather feedback from stakeholders and deliver it directly to WIOA planning groups or those responsible for the state planning process.



Community-Based Service Providers

Get educated about the WIOA combined planning process and contribute your perspective. To be successful, combined state planning processes need to include the perspectives of organizations with experience serving the employment needs and interests of adults and youth facing barriers to employment.

- Community-based service providers should engage WIOA planning leaders at the state and local level and seek to be included in state planning processes to ensure that WIOA plans reflect their and their participants’ perspectives. Community-based service providers should be equipped to communicate the employment and support services they are offering, characteristics of participants served, capacity and unmet needs of their participants, and “what’s missing” or needed within their menu of employment services and supports available for jobseekers facing barriers to employment. Community-based service providers may want to partner with advocates to learn more about what the WIOA planning process will look like in their community and how to weigh in. In many cases, collaboration and pre-planning efforts among community-based organizations and advocates at the local level can help identify and amplify common messages or community needs.
- Community-based service providers should also be ready to engage their participants in the planning process and bring participants to the table to communicate directly with WIOA planners. This means that community-based providers should educate themselves and their participant about the process of providing feedback to the WIOA planning process and help educate and prepare participants about the kinds of information that might be useful to WIOA planning efforts.



Public System Leaders

Prioritize combined state planning efforts. It is in the best interest of leaders of public systems with jurisdiction over state and local programs serving jobseekers facing barriers to employment to leverage these systems' strengths and to engage in WIOA combined state planning efforts. Doing so will help these public systems achieve their complementary goals of increasing employment and economic opportunity for jobseekers facing barriers.

- Combined state planning efforts may require significant state capacity at a time when many states have limited budgets and decreased staff capacity in policy, planning, and research and evaluation services. Because of this, state public workforce leaders and other public agency leaders should draw on the expertise of the stakeholders highlighted throughout this brief to support the development and implementation of combined state planning processes, document information, and drive decisions with the goal of supporting effective planning and partnering with other systems for the benefit of serving jobseekers facing barriers.
- State public system leaders should create or leverage existing interagency working groups, task forces, or workgroups at the state level to develop WIOA Combined State Plans. In addition to representation by the WIOA required public systems, agencies, programs, and elected officials, these interagency working groups should be comprised of leaders from community-based service organizations, front line workforce staff, and local- and state-level data and policy analysts.
- Consistent with the state WIOA board function to identify barriers and how to remove those barriers to better coordinate, align, and avoid duplication among workforce system programs, developing a WIOA Combined State Plan should include an assessment of the menu of employment and support services available through each public system represented.²³ Specifically, this assessment should identify what employment services each system offers, population targets, geography of services, eligibility, and capacity. Many of these [Community Asset Mapping questions](#) can help guide this assessment process. In addition, to support appropriate

Combined State Planning Could Help Identify Additional Funds for Workforce Services

Many states are seeking to build and partner to implement SNAP E&T programs that meet the employment needs of individuals facing significant barriers to employment.

Combined state planning between WIOA and SNAP E&T agencies can lead to the development of a continuum of employment programs and support services for these individuals and may help identify additional workforce and support service resources available at the federal level to support the expansion of services.

Combined state planning efforts should include identifying federal and state workforce resources not currently maximized.

referrals and maximize the use of resources across systems, public system leaders should assess and document each system's particular strengths and funding rules and/or flexibility as they relate to offering and delivering workforce services, training, education, and support services.

- Finally, all too often states are not maximizing available federal and state workforce resources for the benefit of adults and youth facing barriers to employment. Combined state planning efforts should include identifying and documenting any potential federal/state match or reimbursement opportunities that are not currently being maximized in order to bolster available workforce services and supports for jobseekers facing barriers. Furthermore, given that many federal and state funding resources have broad discretion with regard to what workforce services and supports may be offered, states should examine how funds are currently being used and the degree to which available workforce and support services align with the needs of adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment based on this brief's data analysis suggestions.



Philanthropy

Support combined state planning efforts and capacity building efforts across public systems over time. Public systems have a great deal to learn from and contribute to each other about expanding access to employment and economic opportunity for adults and youth facing barriers to employment. Philanthropy can play a unique role in supporting partnerships and capacity building among public systems.

- Philanthropy can convene and host workgroups among public system leaders and the stakeholders mentioned in this brief in order to support robust combined state planning processes. Moreover, given state resource limitations, philanthropy can support combined state planning processes by funding projects that aim to facilitate public system resource mapping focus groups with the stakeholders mentioned here.
- Planning processes and efforts to align multiple systems often surface misconceptions or misinformation. In particular, WIOA combined planning processes may surface misconceptions about the characteristics of adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment, available and allowable resources and programs within public systems, culture and orientation differences, or other myths. To address this, philanthropy can play an important role in funding and convening cross-training efforts among public system leaders and staff with the goal of increasing expertise to address the employment, education, training, and support services needs of adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment. Such efforts are consistent with the functions of WIOA state boards to assist the Governor in the development of strategies to support staff training and awareness across programs supported under the workforce development system and will go a long way toward improving services for adults and youth facing barriers to employment.²⁴

WIOA combined planning processes may surface misconceptions about the characteristics of jobseekers facing barriers. Philanthropy can convene cross-training efforts among stakeholders with the goal of increasing expertise to address these jobseekers' needs.



Researchers

Help design, facilitate, and document planning processes. Researchers and applied research centers that have experience designing, leading, and documenting public system planning processes can be especially useful in supporting WIOA combined state planning processes.

- Researchers should engage state WIOA public leaders and planners to help design public system and funding stream resource assessment and mapping processes and to facilitate these processes among public system partners. Researchers can support public workforce system planners in documenting and distilling these processes so that the public workforce system can make informed decisions about how to leverage other public systems.
- Researchers can play an important role in helping states avoid reinventing the wheel as it relates to public system joint planning and collaboration. Notably, researchers and advocates can help identify state and/or local examples from across the country in which public system partners have collaborated for the benefit of adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment and draw from these examples to lift up lessons learned, challenges, and promising system coordination approaches.

Goal 4: Create Accountability Mechanisms, Evaluate Efforts, and Periodically Revisit Goals for Serving the Employment Needs of Adults and Youth Facing Barriers.

While WIOA instructs the public workforce system to prioritize serving low-income adults and youth, the system will need to make deliberate decisions about resource allocation and prioritization of jobseekers facing barriers to employment. It is important that the public workforce system articulates a vision for serving these jobseekers, creates accountability mechanisms, and evaluates its efforts periodically. This section offers stakeholders actionable recommendations for helping states and communities prioritize and be accountable for serving jobseekers facing barriers to employment.

While the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) statute and guidance instructs the public workforce system to place a priority on serving low-income adults and youth, state and local public workforce systems will need to make deliberate decisions about resource allocation and prioritization of adults and youth facing barriers to employment. Efforts by states and local communities to increase employment and economic opportunity for these jobseekers may be new, expanded, or renewed undertakings. For this reason, it is important that the system articulates a vision for serving these populations, creates accountability mechanisms, and evaluates its efforts periodically.

The state and local WIOA planning process creates opportunities for the public workforce system to engage in these key steps. First, state and local WIOA plans are required to include the community and state's strategic vision and goals for preparing a dedicated and skilled workforce, including for people facing barriers to employment.²⁵ State WIOA boards are also required to articulate how they will implement the priority of service provisions. Finally, local WIOA boards are required to review the local WIOA plan every two years—a natural point-in-time opportunity to evaluate efforts to increase access to employment, education, training, and support services for adults and youth facing barriers to employment.²⁶

Key Question:

How can my community and state intentionally prioritize adults and youth facing barriers to employment and maintain our focus over time?

Advocates, community-based service organizations, public system leaders, philanthropy, and researchers have a role to play in helping to create accountability mechanisms, evaluate efforts, revisit, and, if necessary, update goals for serving the employment needs of jobseekers facing barriers.



Advocates

While WIOA planning efforts are important to shaping the system, it will likely be necessary to course correct and monitor the system over time to ensure there is ongoing progress to engage and serve jobseekers facing barriers to employment.

Ensure that state and local plans reflect the federal law’s intentional focus on jobseekers facing barriers to employment. In state and local WIOA plans, advocates should take full advantage of the opportunity to reflect the intent of the federal WIOA statute around increasing employment and economic opportunity for adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment. Doing so will create levels of accountability by which the plan is measured over time, will demonstrate commitment to federal departments reviewing the plan, and guide state and local agencies and partners who administer the plan.

- Advocates should engage state and local WIOA planners and those responsible for shepherding the plan forward to encourage that state and local WIOA plans include purpose statements that mirror the federal WIOA legislative goal to expand access to employment opportunities, education, training, and support services for jobseekers facing barriers to employment.
- Advocates should also encourage that state and local plans reflect the federal WIOA statutory requirements that 1) adults receiving public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient be given priority for adult employment and training activities regardless of available resources and 2) not less than 75 percent of youth funds are spent on out-of-school youth. Informed by the data analysis requirements discussed earlier in this brief, advocates may want to encourage state and local WIOA plans to specifically target employment strategies or services for particular population groups who have been identified as high need or for whom services have been historically limited.
- Advocates should encourage the development of accountability mechanisms to ensure that purpose statements, goals, and priority of service requirements are monitored and upheld over time. Accountably mechanisms could be in the form of benchmarks for engaging and serving target population groups and the development of policies at the local level to ensure that adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers are prioritized and receive services that meet their needs.
- Finally, advocates should engage with the stakeholders discussed in this brief, among others, to monitor the system’s progress over time. While WIOA planning efforts are important to shaping the system, it will likely be necessary to course correct and monitor the system over time. Monitoring efforts could come in the form of annual meetings with WIOA state and local leaders and other public agency leaders to discuss progress engaging and serving jobseekers facing barriers to employment or advocating for the development of annual reports detailing the system’s progress in meeting these jobseekers’ employment needs and interests.



Community-Based Service Providers

Stay involved as WIOA is implemented, seek ways to continuously improve the system, and educate participants. Hopefully, the WIOA planning process has presented community-based service providers with expertise serving jobseekers facing barriers with opportunities to get involved in shaping system. Staying involved as the system implements new or expanded services, priority of service requirements, and partnerships with other systems will be critical to ensuring that the system continues to account for the needs of jobseekers facing barriers to employment.

- Community-based organizations should stay involved with state and local WIOA leaders—and in particular with chief elected officials and others guiding WIOA implementation—and continue to educate these leaders from the service provider perspective about the system’s progress in meeting the employment needs of jobseekers facing. To facilitate this, community-based providers could offer to coordinate Consumer Advisory Boards made up of adults and youth from priority or target population groups to solicit feedback on how well populations are being served. Local WIOA leaders and staff overseeing program implementation should be involved, as well as local advocates.
- Community-based organizations can also play an important role in educating participants about any changes WIOA implementation may bring, including new, expanded, or reduced services that might be available, changes in referral processes, eligibility for services, and more.



Public System Leaders

Negotiate performance measures thoughtfully and monitor the system’s progress. Historically, jobseekers facing barriers to employment have had difficulty accessing employment services through the public workforce system because of how the system was held accountable for achieving outcomes. The U.S. Departments of Labor and Education are developing a new statistical model to measure state and local WIOA performance that is based on economic conditions and participant characteristics. This new performance accountability model should better reflect the experiences and employment trajectories of jobseekers who may face more difficulty getting and keeping employment and, ideally, should reduce disincentives to serving jobseekers facing barriers. In developing the statistical model, the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education will use factors such as poor work history, lack of work experience, lack of education or occupational skills attainment, dislocation

To help educate the public workforce system’s leaders about the employment needs of jobseekers facing barriers, community-based service providers could offer to coordinate Consumer Advisory Boards made up of adults and youth from priority or target population groups to solicit feedback on how well populations are being served.

from high-wage and high-benefit employment, low levels of literacy, low levels of English proficiency, disability status, homelessness, ex-offender status, and welfare dependency.²⁷

Capturing more accurate information on services delivered on behalf of jobseekers facing barriers to employment and participant characteristics will go a long way toward monitoring and informing the WIOA system.

- Because local WIOA plans must include a description of negotiated levels of performance for their specific geographic area, local workforce boards and the chief elected official should create and negotiate performance measures that reflect the needs of the participants in their service area and/or priority population groups. In addition, other public system leaders—especially those who represent required partners of the WIOA system—should be part of the performance accountability process to ensure that the negotiated levels of performance reflect the characteristics and needs of jobseekers served by programs under their jurisdiction. The data analysis efforts discussed in this brief can be especially helpful in understanding the characteristics of jobseekers being served and can support the development of performance measures that take into account a number of factors that can influence employment success over time.
- To monitor the system’s effectiveness over time in serving jobseekers facing barriers to employment, public system leaders should be mindful of the local- and state-level data being collected and the degree to which that data can inform system monitoring and future planning. Specifically, public system leaders should develop a list of minimum priority data elements that must be collected related to employment assessment and services and process data. Moreover, public systems should work with each other to ensure that data being collected on employment, education, and training services are consistent across systems. Capturing more accurate information on services delivered on behalf of jobseekers facing barriers to employment and participant characteristics will also go a long way toward monitoring and informing the WIOA system. Public system leaders should attempt to agree on common definitions pertaining to participant characteristics.
- Public systems should also continue to leverage interagency planning or workgroups at the state and local level to monitor the system’s progress and the degree to which agreed-upon performance measures reflect the experiences of jobseekers over time.

Public system leaders—especially those who represent required partners of the WIOA system—should be part of the performance accountability process to ensure that the negotiated levels of performance reflect the characteristics and needs of jobseekers served by programs under their jurisdiction.



Philanthropy

Be a catalyst for increasing employment and economic opportunity for adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment. The WIOA planning process offers a point-in-time opportunity for state and local public systems and stakeholders to work toward ensuring the workforce system accounts for the needs and interests of jobseekers facing barriers to employment. In reality, fully realizing these efforts may take many years and require ongoing efforts by many of the stakeholders discussed in this brief. Philanthropy can be an important stakeholder in ensuring that efforts to increase employment and economic opportunity for jobseekers facing barriers remain top-of-mind for leaders of relevant public systems and other stakeholders.

- Philanthropy should make increasing employment and economic opportunity for jobseekers facing barriers a strategic goal and priority of future funding and support. This could mean supporting initiatives to develop strategic plans to end chronic unemployment that use the goals and processes outlined in this brief or funding specific projects aimed at alleviating barriers to employment for a specific population or target group through policy and systems change.
- Philanthropy should also partner with the stakeholders discussed in this brief and others to ensure that the public workforce system is consistently working toward the goals of increasing access to employment, education, training, and support services for adults and youth facing barriers to employment. This could come in the form of: hosting regular events or convenings that seek to assess the public workforce system's progress; discrete projects that seek to implement and evaluate promising workforce strategies, public system partnerships, or collaboration strategies; or supporting the development of annual reports on the system's progress serving adults and youth facing barriers.



Researchers

Support continuous evaluation, system monitoring, and data improvement. There is still a lot to learn about how to best meet the employment needs and interests of adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers. Moreover, several of the required partnerships and joint planning efforts between public systems are likely to surface new considerations in supporting the success of these jobseekers.

- To help equip the public system to make informed decisions and scale up and replicate what's working, researchers should encourage and support continuous research and evaluation of the strategies and partnerships outlined in state and local WIOA plans with an eye toward tracking and evaluating implementation, outcomes, and impacts.
- Public systems need quality, cross-system data in order to offer workforce services and supports that meet the needs and interests of jobseekers facing barriers to employment and to make necessary course corrections. To this end, the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education have said that integrated and aligned data systems are a public workforce system priority.²⁸ Researchers, applied research centers, and university faculty should seek opportunities to get involved in state and local efforts to support the system in improving data collection and fields, tracking data, and integrating public data systems.

Conclusion

Major revisions to America's public laws happen rarely. Now is the time for communities and stakeholders to help shape the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act's (WIOA) implementation—an undertaking that can have lasting and far-reaching positive effects for adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment.

Given the economic and social costs of chronic unemployment and poverty, working to meet the employment needs and interests of these jobseekers must be priority in states and communities.

Acting in partnership with many other system partners and stakeholders, the public workforce system under WIOA can pave the way toward building robust and aligned public systems that meet the workforce needs adult and youth jobseekers facing barriers to employment.

Leveraging the state and local planning processes and other opportunities embedded in WIOA, community stakeholders and leaders can achieve the goals of increasing employment and economic opportunity for adults and youth facing barriers to employment now and into the future.

References

1. Nichols, A., Mitchell, J., & Lindner, S. (2013). *Consequences of long-term unemployment*. Retrieved from the Urban Institute website: <http://www.urban.org/research/publication/consequences-long-term-unemployment>
 2. Belfield, C., Levin, H., Rosen, R. (2012). *The economic value of opportunity youth*. Retrieved from the Civic Enterprises website: http://www.civicerprises.net/MediaLibrary/Docs/econ_value_opportunity_youth.pdf
 3. Nichols et al., 2013.
 4. Simpson, S., (2011). *The cost of unemployment to the economy*. Retrieved from Investopedia website: <http://www.investopedia.com/financial-edge/0811/the-cost-of-unemployment-to-the-economy.aspx>.
 5. Redcross, C., et. al. (2010). *Work after prison: One-year findings from the transitional jobs reentry demonstration*. Retrieved from MDRC website: http://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/full_615.pdf
 6. Burt, M.R., Aron, L.Y., & Lee, E. (1999). *Homelessness: Programs and the people they serve*. Retrieved from the Urban Institute website: <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/310291-Homelessness-Programs-and-the-People-They-Serve-Findings-of-the-National-Survey-of-Homeless-Assistance-Providers-and-Clients.PDF>
 7. Heller, S. B. (2014, December 5). Summer jobs reduce violence among disadvantaged youth. *Science*, 346(6214), 1219-1222
 8. Redcross, C., Millenky, M., Rudd, T., & Levshin, V. (2012). *More than a job: Final results from the evaluation of the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) transitional jobs program* (OPRE Report 2011-18). Retrieved from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families website: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/more_than_job.pdf
 9. Warland, C., Applegate, D., Schnur, C., & Jones, J. (2015). *Providing true opportunity for opportunity youth: Promising practices and principles for helping youth facing barriers to employment*. Retrieved from Heartland Alliance's National Initiatives on Poverty & Economic Opportunity website: http://nationalinitiatives.issuelab.org/resource/providing_true_opportunity_for_opportunity_youth_promising_practices_and_principles_for_helping_youth_facing_barriers_to_employment
 10. Warland, C. (2013). *Healthy relationships, employment, and reentry*. National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families. Retrieved from Heartland Alliance's National Initiatives on Poverty & Economic Opportunity website: http://nationalinitiatives.issuelab.org/resource/healthy_relationships_employment_and_reentry
 11. Huston, A. C., et. al. (2003). *New hope for families and children: Five-year results from a program to reduce poverty and reform welfare*. Retrieved from MDRC website: http://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/full_457.pdf
 12. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, 29 U.S.C § 3101 (2014).
 13. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; Joint Rule for Unified and Combined State Plans, Performance Accountability, and the One-Stop System Joint Provisions; DOL, DOE Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for 2015, 80 Fed. Reg. 20573 (April 16, 2015) (to be codified at 20 CFR pts. 603, 651, 652, 653, 654, 658, 675, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, & 688).
 14. Frank, A., & Minoff, E. (2005). *Declining share of adults receiving training under WIA are low-income or disadvantaged*. Retrieved from Center for Law and Social Policy website: <http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/files/0254.pdf>.
 15. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014. 29 U.S.C. § 3101[Sec. 102 (a-c) and 103 (a-d) and 108 (a-e)]. (2014).
 16. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, 29 U.S.C § 3101[Sec. 101(d)(1),(4)–(5), and (7)–(11)]. (2014).
-

References

17. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, 29 U.S.C § 3101[Sec 102 (a-c) and 103 (a-d) and 108 (a-e)]. (2014).
 18. Ibid.
 19. Ibid.
 20. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; Joint Rule for Unified and Combined State Plans, Performance Accountability, and the One-Stop System Joint Provisions; DOL, DOE Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for 2015, 80 Fed. Reg. 20573 (April 16, 2015) (to be codified at 20 CFR pts. 603, 651, 652, 653, 654, 658, 675, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, & 688).
 21. US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (2015). *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) unified and combined state plan requirements* (DOL Supporting & Related Material Draft ETA-2015-0006-0002). Retrieved from <http://www.regulations.gov#!documentDetail;D=ETA-2015-0006-0002>
 22. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; Joint Rule for Unified and Combined State Plans, Performance Accountability, and the One-Stop System Joint Provisions; DOL, DOE Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for 2015, 80 Fed. Reg. 20573 (April 16, 2015) (to be codified at 20 CFR pts. 603, 651, 652, 653, 654, 658, 675, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, & 688).
 23. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, 29 U.S.C § 3101 [Sec 101 (a-e) and 106 (d-f)]. (2014).
 24. Ibid.
 25. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, 29 U.S.C § 3101 [Sec 102 (a- c) and 103 (a-d) and 108 (a-e)]. (2014).
 26. Ibid.
 27. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, 29 U.S.C § 3101 [Sec 116 (b)(3)(v)(bb)]. (2014).
 28. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; Joint Rule for Unified and Combined State Plans, Performance Accountability, and the One-Stop System Joint Provisions; DOL, DOE Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for 2015, 80 Fed. Reg. 20573 (April 16, 2015) (to be codified at 20 CFR pts. 603, 651, 652, 653, 654, 658, 675, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, & 688).
-

Icon Attribution

Philibert, E. (n.d.). *Leadership*. Retrieved from The Noun Project website: <https://thenounproject.com/term/leadership/147987/>

Iconathon (n.d.). *Shelter for families*. Retrieved from The Noun Project website: <httpsthenounproject.comtermshelter-for-families64>

Iconathon (n.d.). *Federal government*. Retrieved from The Noun Project website: <https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=federal+government&i=15212>

Bu, A. (n.d.). *Seeds*. Retrieved from The Noun Project website: <https://thenounproject.com/alex./collection/dinner/?i=169530>

La-fabrique-cr ative. (n.d.). *Watch*. Retrieved from the Noun Project website: <https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=researcher&i=41279>

33 W. Grand Avenue, Suite 500, Chicago, IL 60654 | 312.870.4949 | ni@heartlandalliance.org
www.heartlandalliance.org/nationalinitiatives | [@NIheartland](https://twitter.com/NIheartland) | <http://bit.ly/NIFacebook>



HEARTLAND ALLIANCE
NATIONAL INITIATIVES

**HEARTLAND
ALLIANCE**
ENDING POVERTY