

WIOA Workforce Systems Integration Workgroup
August 24, 2016
Meeting Notes

Members Participating: Marilyn Boyle – DCS (Lead), Brian Newquist – ACLS, Russell Fenton – ACLS, Gene White – Commonwealth Corporation, Les Abramowitz – DCS, Joan Boucher- DCS, Matt Burke – DCS, Marie Meibaum – DCS, Chris Quan – DCS, Judy Bower – DCS; Ken Messina – DCS, Norca Disla-Shannon, DCS, Scott Ferrier – DCS, Karen Yeretsian – DCS, Kimberly Rowe-Cummings, DTA, Richard Jeffers – DUA, Wendy Hamlett – DUA, Tony Fantasia – DUA, Marina Zhavoronkova – EOLWD, Greg Bunn – EOLWD, Deb Martone – EOLWD IT, Peter Treadway – EOLWD IT, Alexander Pooler – MCB, Graham Porell – MRC, Cathy Byrnes – Lowell Career Center, Joe Viana – Bristol Area Career Centers, Jeff Turgeon – Central MA Workforce Board

Handouts: Agenda, Workgroup Purpose and List of Members, DOLETA Grant Opportunity Summary, Draft Diagram Showing Potential Integration of Workforce Connect within Career Center Model

DISCUSSION TOPICS:

Composition and Role of the Workgroup

Marilyn Boyle kicked-off this first meeting of the workgroup and explained its purpose. The workgroup was authorized by the WIOA Joint Partner Committee composed of the administrators of the WIOA Partner agencies. The Committee meets bi-weekly to direct activities related to implementation of WIOA statewide. Integration of partner IT systems is a mandate of WIOA.

The workgroup will provide input into an interface with information systems used by the WIOA Partner agencies to:

- institute a single sign-on and common intake/registration for individuals seeking services under WIOA programs,
- allow tracking of shared customers across WIOA partner agencies,
- create an on-line dashboard for individuals with information on resources and services relevant to their needs, and
- create a dashboard for staff with information on the status, services and options for individuals they serve.

Members will participate in sessions to identify business requirements and components for the new interface. They may also participate in drafting Requests for Proposals (RFP) for procurement of software and technical resources.

The group will identify subgroups as needed to bring together individuals with the requisite knowledge needed to address specific areas, such as working on requirements for dashboards or identifying information elements for sign-on/registration. It was agreed that a Security subgroup would be identified.

Workgroup Meetings

A standing meeting of the workgroup will be scheduled for every two weeks on Thursday from 1:00 – 3:00 beginning with Thursday, September 15.

DOL Grant Funding Opportunity

The US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA) is making up to \$1.1 million available to state workforce agencies for technology solutions that support and improve connectivity among existing State IT systems and databases in at least one of three specific areas:

1. Common registration and case management across the Title I Dislocated Worker (DW) program, the Employment Service (ES) program, and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program at a minimum. Encouragement is given to inclusion of TAA (Trade Adjustment Assistance) and Rapid Response services, both of which provide support to dislocated workers or employers facing layoffs of closure;
2. Implementation of robust on-line service delivery hubs that integrate the information and on-line services across the DW, ES and UI programs at a minimum.
3. Data integration strategies that support the ability of front-line staff to better connect dislocated workers to the services they need to get jobs in demand along career pathways and expand the capacity to provide career counseling to more customers.

The state's proposal is due before midnight on September 8. It will be prepared and submitted by DCS.

Massachusetts is proposing to adopt/adapt the Workforce Connect suite of applications to provide a cost effective interface to WIOA partner systems to support the following:

1. a common registration platform that meets the information security requirements of the Commonwealth and partner agencies and programs;
2. enhanced case management capabilities through the creation of dashboards for both job seekers and staff at Career Centers and other WIOA partner locations that displays information pertinent to the direct needs of the individuals being served; and
3. development of a structure that supports future enhancement and integration across WIOA partners; that allows for integration with on-line job seeker tools and other self-service applications; that permits identification and tracking of services and outcomes for job seekers across WIOA programs; and that supports performance reporting.

Discussion:

Some members expressed concern about the focus on Workforce Connect. Marilyn reported that the state partners have been reviewing this product for several months and it has been demoed at several meetings, including at a state partners' meeting. The software has been used and enhanced over the last several years by several states (Oregon, Mississippi, New York, New Jersey, Montana, and Texas). Workforce Connect was developed under the auspices of DOLETA and the Information Technology Support Center (ITSC) at the National Association of Workforce Agencies (NASWA). It is available at no cost to NASWA member agencies. The Grant solicitation strongly encourages applicants to consider the Workforce Connect platform.

Several members of the workgroup have also seen LiteracyPro which provides a similar interface to different partner IT systems. It was well received, but is a hosted service with unknown costs associated with the implementation and on-going fees for certain transactions related to referrals among partner agencies.

The impetus to consider Workforce Connect is not just a potential for cost savings in light of the level of the grant award, but also the benefits accruing from collaboration with other states that have or are considering the product (new features become available to all states) and the positive reception it has received from those who have participated in presentations on the product. If this product does not prove to meet the needs identified by the workgroup during the business requirements phase, then alternatives would be considered. When ITSC works with states they recommend alternative systems if it is clear that Workforce Connect will not meet the state's needs.

The workgroup concurred on a recommendation to consider use of State IT cloud services rather than procuring any additional hardware to support the applications, databases, etc., with the attendant staff and maintenance costs.

Timeline

Marilyn made a start at a timeline. ITSC estimated in its August 19th webinar that based on its experience in other states it will take 9-13 months to fully implement the solution depending on the resources available to the state. The application uses open source software, therefore there are no licensing fees. However, each state will incur costs associated with technical support, development of interfaces by partner agencies, customization, and on-going maintenance and future enhancements.

Submit Grant Application	Due: September 8, 2016
Funds Available	Tentatively: September 30, 2016
Obtain Software/Procure ITSC Advising Services	September
Business Requirements and Technology Assessment (with ITSC)	October - February

NEXT MEETING: Marilyn will set up recurring meetings starting with September 15, 2016.

Date: Thursday, September 15, 2016
Time: 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Location: Charles F Hurley Building, 1st Floor Cambridge Conference Room
Address: 19 Staniford Street, Boston, MA

Information on the WIOA Workforce Systems Integration Project will be posted at <http://www.mass.gov/massworkforce/wioa/workforce-systems-integration-project/>