

Strategic Plan



Iowa Workforce Development
October, 2004

Introduction

For the 2004 strategic planning process at Iowa Workforce Development, Director Richard Running asked for as much input from all staff as possible. As a result, planning staff designed an extensive process to gather input over about a three month period during the late spring and summer:

- A Guide to Staff Involvement was drafted and distributed to staff in offices throughout the state. This guide provided a brief explanation of the planning process and quoted extensively from the Vilsack/Pederson Leadership Agenda and the 2003 IWD strategic plan to illustrate each step and to show examples of alignment. The guide also provided suggestions for staff in various locations and work units to conduct their own planning sessions. The structure was designed to solicit feedback regarding elements (vision, mission, guiding principles, goals and strategies) of the existing 2003 plan. Particular attention was devoted to securing non-management staff's perspective during the internal and external assessment exercises.
- Several local offices did conduct their own structured input sessions following the suggested guidelines and sent the results to planning staff in the central administrative offices.
- Other work units in many locations opted to ask planning staff to facilitate planning sessions for them. The results of these sessions were also gathered by planning staff.

In all, dozens of input sessions were held and hundreds of IWD staff participated directly in the process. Because all the sessions followed similar guidelines, it was relatively easy to combine all of the input received and spot common themes that surfaced from the many sessions. A composite of all the flip chart notes was compiled into one large document (for those who like lots of detail) and another document summarized the key themes that emerged.

This information was used in a day-long planning retreat on August 20. Management staff members from throughout the department were invited and each work unit and sub-state region also brought a non-management staff person as well. This group reviewed the themes from the earlier sessions and then addressed each element of the 2003 plan, proposing refinements for almost all sections. Subsequently, senior management reviewed the results of the retreat and made the final decisions for the new 2004 plan.

This thorough approach, with its special emphasis on input from line staff, did result in some significant changes to IWD's plan. Local office staff, for example, consistently expressed the need to step up our marketing efforts, especially with employers. Another need that was expressed clearly and often was the need to beef up staff training efforts, much of the capacity for which had been lost in budget and staff reductions a few years ago. Neither of these issues is new, but the degree of concern expressed by IWD staff has caused us to elevate their importance in this year's plan.

Vision

Iowa Workforce Development envisions a future where Iowa has safe workplaces, a productive and economically secure workforce, and where Iowans are prepared for an ever-changing future.

Mission

IWD has a wide range of programs, customer groups and methods for delivering services. Many of our programs involve the federal/state partnerships that exist for such services as labor exchange, unemployment insurance, health and safety, and labor market information. Customers include job seekers, workers, employers, students, educators, researchers, journalists, and many others. We deliver some of our service directly through our statewide network of workforce development centers, while other services are contracted to sub-state service providers. We are also making increased use of the Internet for critical service transactions.

The substance of IWD's mission has remained quite stable in recent years, although once again this year a minor refinement was made to the language.

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) contributes to Iowa's economic growth by providing quality customer-driven services that support prosperity, productivity, health and safety for Iowans.

Guiding Principles

IWD's guiding principles have remained relatively stable for several years. This year's planning process brought minor changes intended to clarify some points and to shorten the list.

- Integrity
- Honor and respect for diversity
- Results orientation
- Collaboration and partnership (internal and external)
- Data-driven decision making
- Customer focus
- Pro-active leadership in a changing economy
- Model the characteristics of a high performance workplace. These characteristics include:
 - Investing in the knowledge and skills of the workers
 - Striving to continually improve processes
 - Building flexibility, responsiveness and innovation into the workplace
 - Fostering teamwork
 - Deploying technology effectively
 - Tracking rapidly changing conditions, and
 - Anticipating and responding quickly to changing customer needs and wants

Internal and External Assessment

As in the past, the department conducted a number of activities throughout the year to assess our performance, market position, and the satisfaction of internal and external customers.

Iowa Workforce Development routinely tracks economic trends in general, and labor market trends in particular. This year, we are finally seeing a gradual improvement in the economy, with increases in hiring evident especially in the important manufacturing sector.

IWD's strategic plan continues to take into account our Iowa Excellence assessment, employee surveys, the regional needs assessments and plans prepared by the sixteen Regional Workforce Investment Boards, and other sources. We have also collected more internal and external customer feedback this year.

As noted in the introduction, this year's assessment incorporated an extraordinary amount of input by line staff throughout the department and from all parts of the state. There was a remarkable degree of agreement on some of the needs that arose from this process, including the need for more:

- Marketing of services, particularly of local services to employers
- Staff development to keep staff skills and knowledge up to date
- Cohesive, integrated computer systems and blueprint for future IT investments

Strengths:

Structured sessions held with staff statewide along with feedback from job seekers and employers confirmed the findings from previous sources, including our employee surveys. Strengths include:

- Knowledgeable staff who are sincerely dedicated to serving our customers
- Ready access to services, provided largely without charge, through a network of offices in communities throughout Iowa
- Many very good technology tools to support valued services

Weaknesses:

Most of the major internal weaknesses identified relate to reductions in budgets, and therefore staff, in recent years. This exacerbates the need for cross-training and training "back-up" staff for critical functions. A related issue is the need for more succession planning as significant numbers of staff leave the department due to early-out incentives and routine attrition. IWD's staff is the oldest, on average, among Iowa agencies, and we face the prospect of many more baby boomers retiring in the coming years.

Threats:

The list of threats to IWD and its customers includes the slow pace of the current economic recovery, an overall environment that often tends to be hostile to the public sector, and diminished funding.

Iowa's demographics continue to change. Iowa is getting older and its population growth rate is lower than both the national and regional average. Local communities need assistance to successfully assimilate new populations and cultures to expand our population base. Other challenge areas are the urbanization of Iowa, decline in family farms, low median income of Iowans, globalization of business and the political environment.

Opportunities:

Technology offers opportunities to improve the timeliness, efficiency and accuracy of some functions in the form of electronic transactions and support systems that help staff to be more efficient and effective. Legislative activities at the state and federal level may provide opportunities to offer new or expanded services. Finally, the recent special session of the legislature resolved a major question about continued financial resources to support services through our network of offices in rural areas.

Agency-wide Goals, Strategies and Measures

IWD's planning team made significant changes to our goals and strategies this year based on the extensive input from staff throughout the department along with the rest of our assessment process. A couple of existing goals underwent major changes, and three new goals were added. These goals, along with the strategies and measures that apply to each, are:

Goal 1- Grow and Support Iowa's skilled workforce.

(Lead Entity: Workforce Development Center Administration Division)

Strategies:

- a. Provide labor exchange services and training opportunities for job seekers.
- b. Continue to promote and recognize the growth of the one-stop delivery system in our Workforce Centers through building partnerships and improving employment and training services.
- c. Provide specialized services and projects for segments of the population that are under-represented in the workforce.
- d. Establish a skills-based, electronic job matching system to improve access and service to jobseekers and businesses.
- e. Expand and enhance knowledge of services designed to protect employees in the work place

Measures:

- a. Entered employment rates of registrants.
- b. Retention rates of registrants who are placed.
- c. Earnings growth of registrants who are placed.
- d. Occupational injury/illness incidence rates among Iowa's workforce.

Goal 2 - Provide quality products and services

(Lead Entity: Workforce Development Center Administration, Unemployment Insurance, Administrative Services, and Policy and Information Divisions)

Strategies:

- a. Redesign the unemployment tax system.
- b. Design a single, comprehensive technology system that tracks needed information for all divisions.
- c. Build a common customer database across all divisions to help staff improve services
- d. Implement more stable and up to date Internet delivery system for labor market information
- e. Make products and services highly accessible to diverse customers

A number of second-tier strategies were also identified for this goal.

Measures:

- a. Internal and external customer satisfaction rates.

Goal 3 – Develop a 3- 5 year plan to guide IWD’s IT investments to assure the efficient and effective use of resources to meet the needs of all parts of the department.

(Lead Entity: Senior management including director, deputy director, Labor & Workers Comp commissioners, and division administrators, with support from IT staff)

Strategies:

- a. Assess internal IT capacity, technological and market trends, and projected needs.
- b. Adopt a system architecture (hardware, software, personnel, and processes) and prepare transition plans as necessary.
- c. Implement a plan that assures involvement by key decision makers in all parts of the department.

Measures:

- a. Decisions regarding IT investments in hardware, software, and staff development are based on the plan
- b. Internal and external customer feedback

Goal 4 - Improve communications both internally and externally.

(Lead Entity: Director's office and communications staff)

Strategies:

- a. Continue implementation of internal and external communications plans.
- b. Continue marketing our services to businesses.

Measures:

- a. Business contacts.
- b. Web site hit counts.
- c. Responses to Employee Survey.

Goal 5 -- Identify and secure new resources, including grants and fee for service.

(Lead Entity: All divisions)

Strategies:

- a. Each division investigate sources of potential grant opportunities and pool resulting information
- b. Explore policies and opportunities to provide additional services funded by user fees
- c. Explore options for assigning staff dedicated to securing additional resources

Measures:

- a. New grants awarded
- b. Additional revenue generated

Goal 6 - Grow and support Iowa's existing and new businesses.

(Lead Entity: Workforce Development Center Administration Division)

Strategies:

- a. Expand and enhance outreach efforts, including Business Services Representatives and OSHA Consultation staff, to business customers in order to focus more clearly on business needs and how IWD can address them.
- b. Provide labor exchange services to businesses

Measures:

- a. Number of business contacts in all regions.
- b. Number of job orders and placements for businesses

Goal 7 -- Build the knowledge and skills of staff.

(Lead Entity: All divisions)

Strategies:

- a. Conduct a training needs assessment among staff
- b. Inventory "peer experts" who can share their expertise with others
- c. Provide additional cross training
- d. Make more time available for staff to attend training

Measures:

- a. Increase in staff receiving training
- b. Responses to employee survey

IWD Core Functions

All of Iowa Workforce Development's activities, services and products fall within six core functions:

1. Workforce Development Services – The purpose of this core function is to provide those services necessary to promote a successful labor exchange system for businesses and job seekers. It includes job matching and placement, Unemployment Insurance claims services, skill assessment and enhancement, provision of child labor forms and information, specialized services for various population groups, and many other services for employers and job seekers.

2. Economic Supports/Unemployment Insurance – The purpose of this core function is to provide temporary funds for eligible, unemployed workers in order to maintain Iowa's skilled workforce and stabilize Iowa's economy. It includes Iowa's Unemployment Insurance services and child support intercept linkages.

3. Research, Analysis and Information Management – The purpose of this core function is to develop and provide workforce information and analysis to help customers make sound labor market decisions. It includes a large number of activities and services to collect and disseminate information including unemployment rates, occupational, employment and industry trends, wage rates, the solvency of Iowa's Unemployment Insurance trust fund, labor availability studies, and other research.

4. Regulation and Compliance/Labor Services – The purpose of this core function is to enhance the safety, health and economic well being of Iowa's workforce and public through consultation and enforcement of state regulations. It includes a number of activities and services including occupational safety and health enforcement, consultation and education, elevator, amusement ride, and boiler safety, child labor, wage collection, and various licensing, permit, and registration activities.

5. Adjudication/Dispute Resolution – The purpose of this core function is to enforce and adjudicate the rights and duties of workers and employers under workers' compensation and unemployment insurance laws to stabilize Iowans' incomes during periods for work-related injuries and unemployment and provide employers with fair, reasonable and predictable employment standards. It includes Worker's Compensation adjudication, compliance and education services as well as appeals and education activities for Iowa's Unemployment Insurance system.

6. Resource Management – The purpose of this core function is to provide customer support services for the Department and Workforce Development Board. It includes a range of services to assist the other core functions, including financial and personnel services, information technology support, and maintenance of our physical infrastructure.