Kentucky One-Stop Certification Initiative:
Commonwealth-Level Issues for Steering Team Consideration and Action

Introduction

Throughout the course of the Core Team's work on developing One-Stop Career Center certification standards and measures, Team members are identifying barriers to setting the highest possible standards. Many of these barriers are areas that are clearly outside the control of local workforce areas and One-Stop Centers. In some cases, Commonwealth-level attention and action may help overcome the barriers and thereby enable setting the highest possible standards for One-Stop Center certification.

As of March 2011, the Core Team has developed draft One-Stop Career Center certification standards and measures for employer services. These are organized under the following three areas:

I. Organization and staffing of employer services;

II. Providing quality services to employers; and

III. Listening to and satisfying employers, and measuring effectiveness;

Commonwealth-level issues that have arisen in each of these areas of employer services focus are discussed below in further detail. It is expected that additional issues will arise throughout the Team's deliberations related to job seeker services and One-Stop management.

I. Organization and Staffing of Employer Services

A. Need for training and continuing education support for Business Services Team members

The Core Team developed standards and measures related to ensuring that staff members of regional (i.e., workforce area-wide) Business Services Teams (BSTs) receive relevant training (and continuing education) as needed to enable them to be successful in their positions and responsibilities.

Many Core Team members expressed the feeling that local workforce areas and One-Stop Centers lack the resources required to make this level of investment in training for BST members, and suggested that economies of scale could be achieved if the Commonwealth were to ensure the availability of relevant training and continuing education for BSTs.

II. Delivering Quality Services to Employers

A. Need for support to equip Business Services Team members with the technology tools required to work effectively with the business community

In this area of employer services focus, the Core Team developed a certification standard detailing the expectation that BST members will interact effectively with employers and employer/industry organizations within their assigned industry sectors, as well as with economic development. One of several measures developed for this standard is that BST members have appropriate technology for interacting with employers and the industry and economic development communities, including tools such as business (desk) phones, laptop computers, and smart phones.

Members of the Core Team noted that local workforce areas/One-Stop Centers may not have adequate resources to equip BST members with the technology tools required for working quickly and effectively with business; this is an area that the Commonwealth may need to support.

B. Barriers and limitations in current Commonwealth technology platforms and systems

In the course of Core Team discussions, Team members noted several limitations that exist in Kentucky's current One-Stop information system, EKOS (Employ Kentucky Operating System). In the realm of service delivery to employers, Team members raised the issue that EKOS offers no way to attach relevant job seeker documents, such as test scores, resumes, and credentials to the EKOS record. Having these documents available to staff through EKOS would facilitate and improve the screening and referral of well-matched candidates to hiring employer customers. (This was also noted as a barrier to providing high-quality job seeker services.)

Additionally, the Core Team noted that Kentucky's web-based "e3" platform does not offer a user-friendly way for employers to post their job openings (which also impacts the quality of job seeker service delivery).

Finally, members of the Core Team frequently cited the Commonwealth's telephone system as a real barrier and hindrance to high-quality service delivery (for both employers and job seekers). Team members noted that the telephone system is not user-friendly, and lacks the capacity to route customers to appropriate staff members quickly and easily. Team members also shared that, particularly in the current environment of extremely high call volumes, telephone calls from employer (and job seeker) customers often go unanswered due to the limitations of the phone system.

C. Facilities issues

Throughout the consulting team's One-Stop Center site visits, and in several discussions during Core Team meetings, challenges related to Center facilities were raised as barriers to providing high-quality and professional services to employers. (Facilities issues were also raised as they relate to providing high-quality services to job seekers and to engaging partners on-site in One-Stop Centers.) Core Team members noted that some Centers are located in older buildings that are in need of repair and/or remodeling; in some Centers, the physical layout of the building forces partners to be located in different areas or rooms, which serves to enhance a sense that partners are not truly integrated. Accessibility for people with disabilities and the need for more ample and accessible parking at Centers have also been raised as concerns in some areas.

The Core Team's main concern is ensuring that their One-Stop Centers offer an environment that is attractive, pleasant, and professional in appearance for their customers (and partners). Team members envision "business-like" One-Stop facilities that are well-equipped, inviting, and "fresh"-looking. While it is acknowledged that facilities investments can be large, this is an area in which the Core Team strongly feels it needs Commonwealth-level support.

III. Satisfying Employers and Measuring Effectiveness

A. Current technology systems lack the capacity to effectively collect, track, and report on employer service data and employer satisfaction feedback

In this area of focus, the Core Team developed several standards and measures related to collecting, tracking, analyzing, and responding to employer customers' feedback and input. In addition, the Team developed standards and measures for tracking and analyzing employers' use of workforce system services and resources, through the collection of data elements such as repeat business customers, new employer customers engaged, and others.

The Core Team pointed out that Kentucky's One-Stop information system, EKOS, which is presumed to be the primary mechanism for collecting and analyzing data and information related to employer service delivery and employer satisfaction, does not currently have the capacity or functionality to collect, track, and report this data and information. Local workforce areas and One-Stop Centers will need Commonwealth support (possibly to include funding support) to ensure that there are robust mechanisms/systems in place that will enable the collection of relevant employer services data and employer satisfaction information, as discussed in the standards.