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services*

Tennessee Department of  
Labor and Workforce  
Development  
Business Services Staff Manual

June 2017



# Business Services Staff Manual

## Contents

- I. Core Program Provision ..... 2
- II. Purpose of Business Services and Business Service Teams ..... 2
- III. Programs and Services Offered by the Business Service Team ..... 3
  - A) Jobs4TN ..... 4
  - B) American Job Centers ..... 4
  - C) Mobile American Job Center ..... 4
  - D) Veteran’s Services ..... 5
  - E) Work Opportunity Tax Credit..... 5
  - F) Apprenticeship Training Grant..... 5
  - G) On-the-Job Training Grant ..... 5
  - H) Incumbent Worker Training Grant..... 5
  - I) Federal Bonding ..... 6
  - J) Rapid Response ..... 6
  - K) Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker Program (MSFW) ..... 6
- IV. Knowledge of Services ..... 6
- V. Process of Delivering Services..... 7
  - 1) Initial Consultation and On Site Visits ..... 8
  - 2) Selecting Qualified Candidates ..... 8
  - 3) The Hiring Process..... 8
- VI. Asset Mapping ..... 9
- VII. Measures of Reporting Performance..... 9
  - Three Measures of Performance ..... 10
  - Metrics to Measure Performance..... 10
- VIII. Resources ..... 11

## I. Core Program Provision

The purpose of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is to align employment, education, and training programs to strengthen the United States labor market. In order to accomplish this objective WIOA mandates six program components which need to be consistently offered by American Job Centers (AJCs): Youth Workforce Investment Activities, Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities, Adult Education and Literacy, Employment Services, and Vocational Rehabilitation. As defined in WIOA Section 3(13), the core program provision is derived from of the following legislation:

- WIOA Title I Subtitle B Chapters 2 and 3 (relating to Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker employment and training activities);
- WIOA Title II (relating to Adult Education and Literacy activities);
- WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Act Sections 1 through 13 (relating to employment services); and
- WIOA Title IV Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Title I (relating to Vocational Rehabilitation services)

WIOA, specifically Title III – Wagner-Peyser, treats employers with the same level of service and customer-oriented focus that is given to individual program participants. The programs provided to employers are meant to strengthen their labor force and businesses are given incentives such as subsidized wages for individuals enrolled and undergoing training. Catering to businesses is a mutual beneficial arrangement: companies receive skilled employees at a discounted rate while Tennessee at large develops a higher-skilled, more productive workforce.

## II. Purpose of Business Services and Business Service Teams

According to WIOA Section 108(b)(4)(B) business services are intended to promote, market, connect, and provide access to initiatives such as:

- Work Opportunity Tax Credit
- Worker Adjustment Retraining Notice (WARN)
- Rapid Response
- Federal Bonding
- Incumbent worker training programs
- On-the-job training programs
- Customized training programs
- Industry and sector strategies
- Career pathways initiatives
- Utilization of effective business intermediaries
- Apprenticeship promotion
- Assistance for apprenticeships
- Recruiting employers to AJCs
- Connecting job seekers and employers by facilitating relationships
- Mobile American Job Center

These programs are designed to meet the needs of employers in relation to the economic needs of their respective region. An educated, adaptable labor market is the primary objective for workforce development in Tennessee; this sustained improvement of the State's economy is accomplished through the alignment of business personnel needs and skills training. It is the responsibility of business service staff to perform ongoing outreach activities such as:

- Conducting on-site meetings with employers or maintaining a presence at job fairs
- Encouraging employer access to resources provided through grants and tax funding
- Consulting employers on how to reduce high employee turnover rates
- Providing information concerning employee training programs as they relate to labor market trends.

Performance will be measured using one of the three following criteria discussed on page 10 of this document. At the time of this document's publication all three primary indicators of performance are being used to form baselines that will inform future measures of success; there is currently no form that is used by business services teams for the purpose of performance measurement.

Credibility is established through broad knowledge of programs offered by the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD); when speaking with employers, business service staff must be able to clearly explain how each WIOA program can meet specific needs of an employer. Each LWDA should:

- Develop clear, comprehensive strategy to enhance economic performance
- Have a local business services plan to explain their vision
- Include a narrative concerning goals and obstacles anticipated during development
- Use this plan as guidance for how to best approach businesses

The local plan should align with the combined state plan, which can be found at:

[https://tn.gov/assets/entities/labor/attachments/TN\\_WIOA\\_Combined\\_State\\_Plan.pdf](https://tn.gov/assets/entities/labor/attachments/TN_WIOA_Combined_State_Plan.pdf)

Business outreach, including marketing of services, will be covered more in depth under the section titled 'Process of Delivering Services' on page 7.

### **III. Programs and Services Offered by the Business Service Team**

The Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development administers various programs to train, promote, and retain skilled employees across the State. This plan to enhance the labor force is carried out through:

- A) Jobs4TN.gov
- B) American Job Centers
- C) Mobile American Job Center
- D) Veteran's Services
- E) Work Opportunity Tax Credit

- F) Apprenticeship Assistance Training Grant
- G) On-the-Job Training Grant
- H) Incumbent Worker Training Grant
- I) Federal Bonding
- J) Rapid Response
- K) Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW)

Each of these programs will be explained at greater length below.

### **A) Jobs4TN**

This is a virtual recruitment tool where employers can browse the profiles of prospective candidates or post job openings. Through this online portal a company can search for résumés or receive notices for submitted résumés that best match the criteria of the job post. Employers can even specify how often they would like to receive updates concerning submissions (e.g. once a day, once a week, etc.). This digital forum can help connect the more than 90,000 jobs across the State directly to job seekers while aiding in efficient management of responses from the public.

### **B) American Job Centers**

American Job Centers (AJCs) are locations where employers can connect with staff to help identify, attract, and select best-qualified candidates to fill open positions. AJCs offer many services to address the diverse needs of companies across Tennessee. These programs include:

- 1) Customized hiring events to connect with applicants who meet specific skill requirements
- 2) Job Fairs to join other businesses at larger recruiting events
- 3) Applicant screening that involves résumé review and candidate assessments
- 4) Assessments to measure skills, interests, and job-readiness of applicants
- 5) Event room and meeting space to allow companies to hold meetings, provide training, conduct orientations, or schedule interviews

These locations also serve as the anchor point for business service staff to maintain offices and compile reports while not performing outreach activities.

### **C) Mobile American Job Center**

When access to American Job Center (AJC) locations is limited the Mobile American Job Center can be used to fill in for areas lacking brick and mortar locations; the mobility of the Coach provides access those with transportation needs, in both rural and urban areas, by bringing job services directly to underserved communities. Additionally, employers can partner with this recruitment tool to broaden their base of candidates. The Mobile American Job Center can act as a portable AJC or a hiring event facility coordinated by TDLWD that allows networking between candidates and employers. Furthermore, the Mobile American Job Center provides support – such as unemployment insurance information and employee re-training (through the grants explained on the following page) – to companies facing mass employee layoffs.

## **D) Veteran's Services**

Hiring veterans can have many advantages for a company. Technological advances in military equipment, and the requisite training provided to maintain this gear, makes veterans highly competitive in a broad spectrum of job positions. Furthermore, veterans are trained to be mission driven, practice team building, and work efficiently within diverse environments. Business service staff, through their expertise, can explain the many benefits offered to companies by hiring veterans. The incentives provided to hire veterans, along with the highly qualified talent pool which they embody, are a great benefit to any employer.

## **E) Work Opportunity Tax Credit**

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal program, administered by each state, intended to incentivize businesses to hire specific target groups that typically face significant barriers to employment. These target groups include, but are not limited to: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit recipients, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients, veterans, ex-felons, and the long-term unemployed. Within 28 days of the hire date of an individual in one of the categories, an employer can submit an application for the tax credit. If the employee is eligible under the program then the company can receive a tax credit ranging from \$1,200 to \$9,600, depending on the target group. The process for submitting WOTC applications is automated and the employer can apply, and submit all required documentation through the online portal at: <https://www.tn.gov/workforce/article/work-opportunity-tax-credit>.

## **F) Apprenticeship Training Grant**

The Apprenticeship Training Grant (ATG) is given to any Tennessee employer interested in starting an apprenticeship program, or to those already authorized as a Registered Apprenticeship Program by the US Department of Labor. The ATG assists companies in: entering eligible dislocated workers into apprenticeship training, providing assistance in teaching first or second-year apprentices, or offer guidance to pre-apprenticeship program participants.

## **G) On-the-Job Training Grant**

The On-the-Job Training Grant (OJT) encourages employers to hire individuals without prior experience by paying up to 75% of the trainee's wages during a specified training period; to receive this grant the company agrees to continue to employ the trainee upon successful completion of the program.

## **H) Incumbent Worker Training Grant**

The Incumbent Worker Training Grant (IWT) is a competitive grant intended to upgrade the skills of existing full-time employees through continued education. This program incentivizes retention of current workers who will become more knowledgeable and productive through skills attainment. Costs that may qualify for reimbursement include:

- Instructors'/trainers' salaries (if company trainers are used);
- Curriculum development for company officials to determine training needs; and
- Textbooks/manuals, materials/supplies, and tuition expenses if training is provided by an institution regulated by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission

### **I) Federal Bonding**

Federal Bonding is a program offered to employers who are hesitant to hire applicants based upon involvement in the criminal justice system. The bond insures businesses against employee theft and dishonesty, up to an amount of \$5,000, from the date of hire through the first six months of employment. The Federal Bonding program is at no cost to companies and covers any employer, in any state, for any job position.

For more information about this program please contact the Federal Bonding Coordinator at (615) 253-9983

### **J) Rapid Response**

By law Tennessee employers are required to provide written notice to the Dislocated Worker Unit within 60 days of a mass layoff that affects 50 or more workers. Work Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) notices are then generated, and sent within 48 hours, to the Rapid Response team to mitigate a meeting with businesses to discuss transition services for employees. Strategies to offset the negative consequences of mass layoffs include information on: unemployment insurance benefits, retraining, skills upgrades, labor market information, and American Job Center services.

### **K) Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker Program (MSFW)**

From the spring through the autumn months employers in the agriculture industry of Tennessee require seasonal farm workers to help harvest the varied crops that grow across each region in the State. The MSFW program is intended to help companies find qualified farm workers to meet labor demand.

## **IV. Knowledge of Services**

In order to establish a professional presence when approaching businesses it is imperative to have an in-depth understanding of the programs offered by the TDLWD. Business service staff should confidently explain the requirements and benefits of each program; representatives must also provide suggestions on how services can work in concert to maximize positive results for the companies served. Five programs offer the most benefit to employers: WOTC, Federal Bonding, Apprenticeship Assistance Training Grant, Incumbent Worker Training, and the On-the-Job Training Grant. Federal Bonding and WOTC can be combined and added to any of the training grants listed. Please reference the 'Co-Enrollment Guidance' and 'One-Stop Delivery and Design Policy' by visiting: <https://www.tn.gov/workforce/article/wioa-technical-assistance>. Further guidance can be found under the 'Resources' heading on page 10.

For example, if an employer is apprehensive to hire an ex-offender then a business service representative could provide information to demonstrate that this demographic qualifies for a tax credit (WOTC), insurance against fraud or theft (Federal Bonding), and their wages while training could be subsidized (OJT Grant). By using a proactive approach, with programs to demonstrate the intrinsic benefit of an applicant, the best candidate for the position can be transformed into a valuable asset to an employer.

Another example of combining programs for maximum benefit would be in the case of hiring veterans. If an employer is pressed to increase their staff by 5 employees then hiring veterans

would be a wise choice: tax credits are available for new hires of this targeted group and this credit can be combined with Apprenticeship Training or On-the-Job Training to subsidize wages during training. As a result a company would receive benefits to gain skilled employees. If explained in this context a business would certainly express interest in programs offered by TDLWD.

Business service staff are encouraged to use labor market information, located in Jobs4TN, to consult with both employers and job seekers. This information is useful because it explains which career paths are growing in Tennessee; this data can help job seekers make an informed decision when selecting a career or help employers to choose trends in education and training which can best develop their workforce. Furthermore, Jobs4TN allows for Partner agencies to communicate programs offered and required criteria for participants within one convenient resource.

## V. Process of Delivering Services

When meeting with employers it is best for business service staff to carefully consider the specific needs of a company rather than rely on simply listing services. A focus on listening, instead of speaking, is a 'transformational' rather than 'transactional' approach. Emphasis must be placed on allowing an employer to express their needs before a list of services are offered.

Transactional conversations limit both parties to a situation where something is given and, in turn, something is received. For example, if business service staff is only concerned with increasing performance measures – to demonstrate a service was provided – there will be little attention paid to how effective the services are to the company. The goal of business service staff should be on aiding businesses to develop the long-term strength of the workforce, not just providing an activity only to meet performance measures.

In order to obtain more information concerning the needs of businesses it is important to ask probing questions. This technique begins by presenting factual statement to frame the conversation; by presenting a fact the business service staff has provided an opportunity for the employer to present their observation. Using the employer's response the business service staff is then able to ask a focused question that creates a dialogue on how to best provide services. The final step in this technique is to provide features of the program but focus on how these can benefit the employer and help develop their workforce.

For example, business service staff could pose opening questions or general statements – in this case concerning apprenticeship programs – such as:

- "I recently heard on the news that the president wants to add 5 million new apprenticeships to the labor force over the next five years"
- "How do you feel about the growing number of apprenticeships being adopted by employers?"

Based on this response the business service staff can gather, through the employer's expressed level of interest, the programs offered under WIOA have found a receptive audience. If the tone of the conversation does not produce results then another general statement or question



should be used to probe the employer for applicable business service programs. Depending on the response the business service staff can offer services that are most applicable to the conversation, in this case the various training programs offered under WIOA.

A more friendly, and beneficial, method is to approach an employer from a perspective that addresses the company needs and how to best resolve existing issues. When meeting with companies a tailored approach is beneficial because it saves both parties time discussing services that won't be applicable. The goal is to 'transform' the workforce in a meaningful way rather than offer solutions to non-existent problems.

### **1) Initial Consultation and On Site Visits**

The process for delivering services begins when local business service staff tours a worksite or coordinates with a chamber of commerce (or other organization focusing on economic and community development) to learn about the workforce-related needs of a company or community, specifically to outline the sought-after characteristics of candidates. During this visit staff will gain an understanding of the requirements and skills necessary to recruit the most qualified applicants for open positions. This initial step, if carried out effectively, will provide the criteria to screen candidates according to the unique needs of a company. The data from outreach activities must be recorded in Jobs4TN in order to ensure full coverage of a local area and to track the responsiveness of businesses to WIOA programs. Staff must use this list to reflect which businesses have been worked with to avoid excessive contact; it is important to be respectful and not solicit so often that it can be viewed as burdensome. The strategy for approaching businesses will be derived from the information in Jobs4TN. Staff is encouraged to create a profile through Jobs4TN in order to record the date, time, and services offered; however, if an employer has declined to enroll through the online portal the business service staff must record dates and times of contact in an Excel spreadsheet in order to track and eliminate redundant outreach.

### **2) Selecting Qualified Candidates**

Staff will then use this knowledge to draw qualified candidates from existing talent pools. Business service staff must ensure that candidates are work-ready and fulfill all job listing requirements before a referral is made to employers. By following these steps, an applicant selected for an interview will be more prepared to speak confidently about how they match the criteria for the position, resulting in a greater probability that a candidate will be hired. Referrals should be done so that companies are receiving the best applicants for the position according to a thorough understanding of the needs and desires shared by employers.

### **3) The Hiring Process**

If the individual is hired, business service staff are encouraged to follow up at regular intervals (e.g. 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, and 120 days following the hire date) to ensure that the employee continues to be an appropriate match to the position. This frequent contact with employers also helps maintain a positive relationship.

If an applicant is not hired then it is the responsibility of the business service staff to work with the employer to determine why the candidate was not a good fit for the position. From the feedback received the job order can be modified; changing a job order can have a

profound impact on the pool of potential applicants. Furthermore, these amendments to the job posting should be recorded in Jobs4TN to track common occurrences so they can be addressed at a later date. Reasons for an unsuccessful hire may include:

- Skills gap
- Unqualified applicants
- Poor soft skills
- Already working
- Compensation not at market level
- Listing unaligned to existing labor market
- Other

In the event that a job listing is closed within 30 days, without an individual being hired, business service staff is expected to contact the employer to seek out alternative recruitment options.

## **VI. Asset Mapping**

Asset mapping identifies resources in the community and provides Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) with an inventory of key resources within their local service delivery area. An asset mapping list includes entities with which the business service staff already has relationships, such as: local governments; chambers of commerce; local, regional, or state economic development entities; local banks, credit unions, or other finance institutions; and utility companies. The LWDB can use these resources to form a strategy to promote the economy within the local area; this coordination will rely heavily on the expertise provided by the business service staff. Furthermore, the business service staff needs to coordinate with the business service staff of WIOA core partners working within the American Job Centers.

Once core partners have established a Memorandum of Understanding for One-Stop Service Delivery then staff can leverage other resources, whether public or private, to help companies hire talented workers. Business service staff must ensure that these resources are utilized when it is determined that an employer targeted for assistance is in need of such services, at which time LWDBs can provide the employer with contact information.

## **VII. Measures of Reporting Performance**

Once WIOA is fully implemented, effective on July 1, 2017, the general accountability structure for business services staff will be as follows:

1. Business service staff is responsible for meeting directly with business leaders. During these meetings the teams will form positive relationships, assess the needs of the employer, and formulate a customized plan to develop the targeted workforce.
2. Business service staff will report directly to the Team Lead of their American Job Center to disclose information regarding which employers they met with, which programs were offered, and how many employees will be served.

3. This data is then compiled by the One-Stop Operator and reported to the Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) for performance review. More information regarding the metrics and monitoring of performance are listed as the 'Three Measures of Performance.'

### **Three Measures of Performance**

The criterion to measure and report the performance of service delivery is dependent on three measurements. The State must select two of the following three benchmarks which will be reported to the U.S. Department of Labor and State Workforce Development Board; the criteria selected by the State will evaluate the effectiveness of their strategy. These measurements include:

1. Retention of an employee with the same employer for the second and fourth quarter after exit from the program.

The measure of retention, concerning short-term and long-term placement of a recruited employee, is a way to determine if a candidate was matched with the proper position. A stable workforce depends on qualified employees maintaining their positions once hired.

2. Repeat business customer rate measures the percentage of employers who receive core services more than once in the last three recording periods.

This measure is intended to demonstrate that a business is satisfied with the services they received. By continually seeking out the assistance of business service staff, a company has indicated that the consultation carried out a recruitment strategy that was beneficial to their staffing needs.

3. Employer penetration rate measures the percentage of employers using services in the State.

The percentage of employers seeking out the services of business services teams is a method to analyze how effective the services offered by American Job Centers are when compared to other comparable job recruitment services. This illustrates how successful business service staff is in maintaining good relationships with employers and whether or not this reputation is felt across industries within a respective area.

Performance measures will be reported through Jobs4TN – specifically, but not limited to, dates of outreach, services provided, and individuals enrolled.

### **Metrics to Measure Performance**

In order to ensure that performance measures are directly tied to quantifiable data thresholds have been negotiated between the States and the Secretaries of Education and Labor. These goals are negotiated, assessed, and agreed upon annually. A successful business service team is the driving force behind a One-Stop center meeting, and exceeding, these goals.

The State is required to meet negotiated outcomes to measure program performance that are explained in Tennessee's Combined State Plan. These goals are then agreed upon, in contract form, between the State and the Secretaries of Labor and Education.

Financial sanctions based on performance failures will be applied, for two consecutive years, the State fails to meet:

1. Ninety percent (90%) of the overall State program score for the same core program;
2. Ninety percent (90%) of the overall State indicator score for the same primary indicator;  
or
3. Fifty percent (50%) of the same indicator score for the same program.

Failure to report the WIOA State annual report and/or State ETP report may also lead to financial sanction. Determination of the sanctions will be “phased in” based on data availability.

## VIII. Resources

Work Opportunity Tax Credit:

<https://www.tn.gov/workforce/article/work-opportunity-tax-credit>

Federal Bonding:

<http://bonds4jobs.com/>

Apprenticeship Assistance Training Grant:

<https://www.tn.gov/workforce/article/workforce-apprenticeshiptraininggrant>

Incumbent Worker Training Grant:

<https://www.tn.gov/workforce/article/incumbent-worker-training>

On the Job Training Grant:

<https://www.tn.gov/workforce/article/on-the-job-training-grants>