**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act**

Business Services Plan

No individual in the United States may, on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, [disability,](https://www.law.cornell.edu/definitions/index.php?width=840&amp;height=800&amp;iframe=true&amp;def_id=5814e48524e23b3549a88bcae9486b1d&amp;term_occur=1&amp;term_src=Title%3A29%3ASubtitle%3AA%3APart%3A38%3ASubpart%3AA%3A38.5) or political affiliation or belief, or, for beneficiaries, applicants, and participants only, on the basis of citizenship or participation in any WIOA Title I-financially assisted program or activity, be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, subjected to discrimination under, or denied employment in the administration of or in connection with any WIOA Title I-financially assisted program or activity.



Equal opportunity employment/program.

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

# Introduction

## Core Provisions

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, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Employment Services.

WIOA created a comprehensive workforce development system that places an emphasis on implementing innovative programs and strategies designed to meet the needs of all employers in the State, improve linkages between the Oklahoma Works American Job Centers (OWAJC) and all employers, provide business services and strategies that better engage employers in the workforce investment activities, and make the workforce development system more relevant to the needs of the State and local businesses.

In accordance with WIOA 108(b)(4)(B) the business services will work to promote, market, connect, and provide access to initiatives such as:

1. Certain career services must be made available to local employers, specifically labor exchange activities and labor market information described in 20 CFR 678.430. Local areas must establish and develop relationships and networks with large and small employers and their intermediaries, and develop, convene, or implement industry or sector partnerships.
2. Customized business services may be provided to employers, employer associations, and other such organizations. These services are tailored for specific employers and may include:
3. Customized screening and referral of qualified participants in training services to employers;
4. Customized services to employers, employer associations, or other such organizations, on employment-related issues;
5. Customized recruitment events and related services for employers, including targeted job fairs
6. Human resource consultation services, including but not limited to assistance with:
7. Writing/reviewing job descriptions and employee handbooks;
8. Developing performance evaluation and personnel policies;
9. Creating orientation sessions for new workers;
10. Honing job interview techniques for efficiency and compliance;
11. Analyzing employee turnover;
12. Creating job accommodations and using assistive technologies; or
13. Explaining labor and employment laws to help employers comply with discrimination, wage/hour, and safety/health regulations;
14. Customized labor market information for specific employers, sectors, industries, or clusters; and Other similar customized services.
15. Local areas may also provide other business services and implement strategies that meet the workforce development needs of area employers, in accordance with the statutory and regulatory requirements of partner programs and consistent with Federal cost principles. These business services may be provided through effective business intermediaries working in conjunction with the LWDB, or through the use of economic development, philanthropic, and other public and private resources in a manner determined appropriate by the LWDB and in cooperation with OOWD. Allowable activities, consistent with each partner’s authorized activities include, but are not limited to:
16. Developing and implementing industry sector strategies (including strategies that involve industry partnerships, regional skills alliances, industry skill panels, and sectoral skills partnerships);
17. Customized assistance or referral for assistance in the development of a registered apprenticeship program;
18. Developing and delivering innovative workforce investment services and strategies for area employers, which may include career pathways, skills upgrading, skill standard development and certification for recognized postsecondary credential or other employer use, and other effective initiatives for meeting the workforce investment needs of area employers and workers;
19. Assistance to area employers in managing reductions in force in coordination with rapid response activities and with strategies for the aversion of layoffs, which may include strategies such as early identification of firms at risk of layoffs, use of feasibility studies to assess the needs of and options for at-risk firms, and the delivery of employment and training activities to address risk factors;
20. The marketing of business services to appropriate area employers, including small and mid-sized employers; and
21. Assisting employers with accessing local, State, and Federal tax credits.

# Business Services Plan

In accordance with WIOA, the Northeast Workforce Development Board (NEWDB) Business Services Plan is designed to support the Oklahoma’s workforce development system through targeted programs and strategies that address the needs of businesses within the Northeast Workforce Development Area (NEWDA). Through the Oklahoma Works American Job Centers (OWAJC), NEWDA core partners, required partners and other workforce partner entities the NEWDB Business Services team develops, offers, and delivers quality business services that assist businesses and industry sectors in overcoming the challenges of recruiting, retaining, and developing talent for the regional economy.

## Vision

The Northeast Workforce Development Board Area will have a world-class workforce that is educated, skilled, and working in demand occupations that meet the local employer needs in order to keep Oklahoma’s economy competitive in the global marketplace.

## Strategy

In order to accomplish the NEWDB vision the Business Services team will build on existing practices and focus on key areas of business services development that add value to employers and functionally support the Northeast workforce system as a whole, including the training programs, sector strategies and career pathways. The Business Service team will focus efforts on coordination and connection local and state economic development and chambers of commerce and strengthen linkages and streamline services within the one-stop delivery system, OWAJCs. Additionally, the Business Services team will facilitate business engagement in workforce development programs and services that effectively:

* Increases awareness of services and resources provided through the workforce system;
* Increases the likelihood of employers hiring job seekers through the workforce system;
* Creates and strengthen career pathways aligned to business and industry demand;
* Provides business intelligence to employers, intermediaries, and partners to ensure the workforce is relevant and useful;
* Ensure strong talent pipelines for demand occupations that allow business to grow and be successful; and
* Establish the NEWDB as an integral partner that adds value to regional economic development efforts by making connections to workforce strategies, solutions, and cutting-edge labor market research and data.

## Established Goals

Established Business Services goals were based on and initial Employer Engagement Self-Assessment, as outlined in OWDI 01-2020. The Business Services Team conducted an initial analysis of current practice to identify gaps and identify promising practices in the current business services delivery process. The assessment, as prescribed, focused on five (5) key areas: Vision, Demand Planning, Engaging with Business and Delivery Solutions, Outreach and Communication, and Sustainability and Continuous Improvement. The results of the initial assessment and identified service component served as the basis for establishing the Business Services goals and strategies. Each key category for assessment was scored by the Business Services Team using a scale of 1-5 (1=Not at all and 5=We’ve got this) with each team member scoring the elements of each category. The results of the assessment are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Categories | Average Score |
| Vision | 3 |
| Demand Planning | 3 |
| Engaging with Business and Delivery Solutions | 3 |
| Outreach and Communication | 3 |
| Sustainability and Continuous Improvement | 2 |

Table 1: Initial Employer Engagement Self-Assessment

Based on the results of the initial assessment, the following elements were identified most in the post-assessment analysis—a need for creating buy-in across all levels of partner and business relations; develop a shared vision that incorporates all partners in building a stronger business service base; eliminate agency silos by developing inclusive approaches to service coordination; focus on demand occupations; implement training opportunities for unified approach and messaging; identify partner and team roles and responsibilities; include all partner information in outreach efforts; open communication; develop internal processes for partner and business team hand-off or service referral, and providing system and partner feedback as need for continuous improvement.

While the initial Employer Engagement Self-Assessment was limited to the Business Services Team, the NEWDB continuous improvement strategy includes a scale up of the assessment through engagement with our system and business partners. The resulting feedback will be incorporated into the business service plan as applicable.

## Strategic Goals

*Strategic Goal 1: Enhance communication and engagement of employers in the workforce development system.*

Goal 1 Objectives:

1. Develop consistent messaging of one-stop system services through all core, co-located and external partners and communicate through Core Calls, newsletter, social media and other partner meetings
2. Conduct assessment of business service capacity throughout the workforce delivery system
3. Provide customized workforce information on State, regional and local labor market conditions, industries, occupations, and the characteristics of the workforce, skills businesses need,
4. Assess local employment dynamics information such as workforce availability, worker supply and demand, business turnover rates, job creation and job identification of high growth and high demand industries

*Strategic Goal 2: Identifying appropriate strategies for assisting employers and coordinate business services activities across OWAJC partner programs and local economic development agencies, as appropriate.*

Goal 2 Objectives:

1. Business Service Team coordination and participation in internal partner meetings with the leadership of the NEWDB, Title 1, Adult Education, Wagner-Peyser, and Department of Rehabilitation Services.
2. Conduct 10 meaningful business service contacts or site visits with employers per quarter within the area in order to identify and monitor needs and build industry relationships.
3. Develop an effective referral system between all partners to enhance service delivery for jobseekers, ensuring all participant receive the services and support they need to succeed.
4. Engage employers is local sector partnership and sector strategies planning and program development by conducting at least one sector partnership or strategy event per program year.

*Strategic Goal 3: To enhance service delivery to both employers and jobseekers in Northeast Oklahoma.*

Goal 3 Objectives:

1. Expand business service access points by the utilization of “virtual” activities, including virtual job fairs, virtual hiring events and Skillful Talent Series training opportunities.
2. Train for applicable in-demand industries only to ensure jobseekers receive the training of their choice in a field that provides sustainable employment.
3. Develop career pathways with input from private industries and educational training providers in the region.
4. Provide training in the NEWDB Region that leads to recognized credentials, which assist jobseekers to obtain sustainable employment and meet the needs of business and industry.
5. Coordinate business outreach activities with core, co-located, and external partners through the development of a shared vision.
6. Work with employers to promote resources and best practices for equal opportunity and nondiscrimination and ways in which to improve outreach and service to underserved EO populations.
7. Track and evaluate target population changes to inform employer and community outreach efforts and develop promising strategies and initiatives to anticipate workforce needs.

*Strategic Goal 4: To increase awareness of the Areas Talent Delivery System.*

Goal 4 Objectives:

1. Conduct coordinated outreach efforts on social media platforms in order to increase awareness of the services available through the Oklahoma Works American Jobs Centers.
2. Improve employer perception of the Oklahoma Works American Jobs Centers located in the Northeast Workforce Development Area through educational outreach campaigns.
3. Finalize the NEWDB’s website to serve as a “one-stop-shop” for Title I services in the area.
4. Coordinate with partners to ensure all applicable information is available at community outreach events.

*Strategic Goal 5: To address Skills Gaps specific to Northeast Oklahoma’s in-demand industry needs.*

Goal 5 Objectives:

1. Survey businesses to assess the true needs of business and industry in the Northeast Oklahoma area.
2. Utilize partnerships to develop customized training programs that are identified by comparing the fore mentioned survey results to training available in the region.
3. Identify training gaps that may exist within the five “in-demand” industry sectors through surveys and analytics
4. Develop proactive linkage and referral of establishments to community resources that support their workforce needs.

# Business Services, Processes, and Business Service Teams

Businesses should have access to a one-stop experience in which high quality and professional services are provided across partner programs in a seamless manner. The NEWDB is positioned to provide a single point of contact to each employer representing all core programs, making the difference between specific core programs invisible to the businesses they serve and provide services to the local area as a unified unit. Effective business services are developed in a manner that supports engagement of employers of all sizes in the context of both regional and local economies avoiding multiple uncoordinated contacts.

The plan is intended to provide a roadmap for internal and external workforce system partners, employers, and participants that effectively address skills gaps in Northeast Oklahoma and ensures the effectiveness of the One-Stop Deliver System in addressing employer needs. The Business Services Consultant will serve as the primary point of contact for the Business Services Team and will be responsible for carrying out the vision and goals of the Business Services Plan. Operationally, the business services team includes—Tier 1) the Business Services Consultant, One-Stop Operator, and the Workforce Development Specialist and Tier 2) Core Partners including, OESC, DRS, ABE, and other partners including, Cherokee Nation, and Job Corps, and includes broader participation and input from the entire workforce delivery system partners. The Business Services team is responsible for carrying out the following:

* Developing a clear understanding of industry skill needs;
* Identifying appropriate strategies for assisting employers and coordinate business services activities across OWAJC partner programs and local economic development agencies, as appropriate;
* Incorporating an integrated and aligned business services strategy among OWAJC partners to present a unified voice for the American Job Center in its communications with employers;
* Facilitating engagement of employers in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations;
* Supporting a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area;
* Enhancing coordination of workforce development programs and economic development; and
* Strengthening linkages between the one-stop delivery system (OWAJC) and unemployment insurance

programs.

## Core Business Services

Through an employer-focused approach to delivering quality workforce development services, the business services team will support NEWDA employers and industry sectors by focusing efforts around the following eight (8) core services:

* Employer Information and Support Services
* Workforce Recruitment Assistance
* Engaged in Strategic Planning/Economic Development
* Accessing Untapped Labor Pools
* Training Services
* Incumbent Worker Training
* Rapid Response/Business Downsizing Assistance
* Planning Layoff Response

## Process for Delivering Business Services

The process for delivering services begins with developing an understanding of local business needs. The NEWDB will use demand occupation data to determine which service application(s) meet the needs of employers. The busines services consultant will develop employer contact lists using economic forecasting data to identify open positions within the seven-county region. The lists will represent the demand occupations identified by the NEWDB that align with the local and state plans, including Manufacturing, Healthcare, Transportation, Construction and Office Administration & Support.

The business contact and demand occupation lists will serve as the foundation for business outreach and engagement. The business services team will utilize the list to identify and contact new employers for initiating outreach and engagement efforts. The business contacts lists will focus on small to medium companies based on the number of employees and expand to larger companies as small to medium business engagement efforts are exhausted. When setting up a meeting with an employer, the business services team will use the Business Contact Tracking Report, or other NEWDB approved tracking process, to document upcoming appointments and record outcomes. All business contacts recorded in the contact list will be transferred to OJM, the state mandated system for official record keeping.

The NEWDB will ensure:

* FTEs are trained in required activities.
* All core business services are made available and provided in the local area/region, including
  + Rapid Response/layoff aversion,
  + Data provision,
  + Register Apprenticeship (RA) outreach and program development,
  + Employer focused events (a minimum of one per quarter),
  + Sector partnership support,
  + Competency-based hiring, and
  + Employer incentive promotion and training.
* The development of a coordinated business services strategic plan for the region that includes workforce development and economic development and/or chamber staff.
  + This should include a business needs assessment to inform strategy (e.g., LMI data review, employer focus groups, interviews, survey data, etc.)
  + OOWD may offer technical assistance in the form of local team facilitation
* Monitoring of performance and implementation of continuous improvement strategies as needed.
* Promotion of business services via NEWDB website.
* Partnership with economic development, chambers, and Oklahoma Department of Commerce (ODOC) teams on an ad-hoc basis in order to develop workforce development strategies and solutions for business recruitment and expansion activities.
* The development of a communications strategy for employer engagement activities.

## Employer Engagement

While employer engagement occurs through multiple methods, site visits, telephone calls, industry meetings, and etc., identifying business contacts ahead of time allows the business services team an opportunity to conduct background research on the company through OJM, other team members or partners, or through examining the company website to gain a better understanding of the company operations, past services through the NEWDB or system partners.

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 recorded in OJM helps 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 the Business Contact List and OJM.

Obtaining the background information on a company allows the business services team to focus the engagement on the specific needs of a company rather than rely on simply listing services. When meeting with employers, team members should focus on listening and allowing an employer to express their needs before outlining the list of business services available.

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. Meaningful employer engagement is an exchange of dialog between the team member and the company representative that addresses the business’ concerns through customized business service solutions. It is important to ask probing questions to gain a better understanding of needs in order to provide solutions that can benefit the employer and help develop their workforce. 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.

In accordance with WIOA, the Northeast Workforce Development Board (NEWDB) Business Services Plan is designed to support the Oklahoma’s workforce development system through targeted programs and strategies that address the needs of businesses within the Northeast Workforce Development Area (NEWDA). Through the Oklahoma Works American Job Centers (OWAJC), NEWDA core partners, required partners and other workforce partner entities the NEWDB Business Services team develops, offers, and delivers quality business services that assist businesses and industry sectors in overcoming the challenges of recruiting, retaining, and developing talent for the regional economy.

## Knowledge of Services

Credibility is established through broad knowledge of programs offered by the NEWDA OWAJC; 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 Business Service team member 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

In order to establish a professional presence when approaching businesses, the business service team must have an in-depth understanding of the programs offered by the Northeast One-Stop Delivery System. Team members should be able to confidently explain the requirements and benefits of each program, including Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker Youth, Title II Adult Basic Education, Title III Wagner Pyser and Title IV Department of Rehabilitation Services. Business service team members must be able to effectively communicate how WIOA services can work in concert to maximize positive results for the companies, including the benefits of the following to employers: WOTC, Federal Bonding, Apprenticeship Assistance, Training Assistance, Incumbent Worker Training, and the On-the-Job Training Assistance.

When possible, the business services team should to use labor market information (LMI) and develop profiles before consulting with both employers and job seekers. LMI is useful because it explains which career paths are growing within the Northeast workforce development area and helps employers to identify trends in education and training that can assist them in understanding the needs of their workforce.

## Business Services Toolkit

To ensure business receive appropriate levels of support based on their organizational needs, the business services team will build their knowledge of services available and work toward improving processes for services delivery. by focusing on the following priority business services:

* LMI Reports with recommendations on recruitment strategies
* Competency-based hiring practices
* Assessing new hires for hidden skills using a competency-based skills assessment agreed upon by the business services team
* Screening candidates for hire
* Examples of competency-based assessments may include, but are not limited to: introduction to safety credentials, and computer familiarity skill assessments
* Sector partnerships
* Expanding Registered Apprenticeship (RA) opportunities
* Employer-focused events and outreach
  + Specialized recruitment events/job fairs
  + Workforce Summit
  + RA/Work-Based Learning (WBL) Summit
  + Disabilities Summit
  + Youth Summit
  + Rapid Response - WIOA required
* Layoff Aversion - WIOA required
* Promotion of employer incentives (RA tax credit, Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), etc.

Other business services tools:

* Posting job orders, including job order analytics
* Promoting OWAJCs and OKJobMatch as part of communications strategy
* Providing space for interviews at the OWAJC

# Measures of Reporting Performance

The business services must fall within the 8 core program services included within this guidance; however, the description of services is a non-exhaustive list as not to restrict innovative thinking about methods of service provision.

The NEWDB has the flexibility for the development of sector-based strategies that support the meet the needs of the areas businesses and comply with relevant statutory provisions.

* Business service team 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.
* Business service team will provide timely updates to the Business Services Consultant to disclose information regarding which employers they met with, which programs were offered, and how many employees will be served.
* The Business Service Consultant will track and manage business service contacts and data entry by all team members to ensure accuracy of reporting.
* The Business Service Consultant is responsible for compiling data, based on recorded business service activities and submitting reports as required to the NEWDB and state and federal reporting authorities for performance review.

## Three Measures of Performance

WIOA sec. 116(b)(2)(A)(i)(VI) requires the Departments to establish a primary indicator of performance for effectiveness in serving employers, the sixth primary indicator of performance. The criterion to measure the NEWDB’s effectiveness in serving employers includes:

1. Retention with the same employer—This measure addresses the NEWDB’s efforts to provide employers with skilled workers 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 trainee was matched with the proper position.
2. Repeat business customer—This measure addresses the NEWDB’s efforts to provide quality engagement and service to employers/sectors and establish productive relationships with employers and sectors over extended periods of time. The 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—This 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 OWAJC are when compared to other comparable job recruitment services. This measure illustrates how successful the business services team is in maintaining good relationships with employers within the NEWDB area.

The NEWDB will utilize business service data collected through OJM to report the performance of service delivery to the U.S. Department of Labor and the Office of Workforce Development. A successful business service team is the driving force behind a One-Stop center meeting, and exceeding, these goals described in this plan.

Approved by NEWDB Executive Committee

Heather Smoot Date: 2/11/2021

Northeast Workforce Development Board Chair