

ATTACHMENT I

SEAMLESS PLANNING: LESSONS LEARNED

The following is a summary of insights gathered from discussions with state and local staff with experience in seamless planning.

⇒ **Leadership and creativity**

- \$ Encourage the Governor to be engaged and pro-active, e.g., ask the Governor to publicize his/her vision and goals for the state's workforce system.
- \$ Recognize that state and local governments have to exercise creative leadership since WIA mandates a high level of discretion and control at both the local and state levels.
- \$ Acknowledge that system reform depends on state and local leaders' outlooks. One state mentioned that the focus needs to be on collaboration rather than mere compliance, and another said, "We have to be leaders rather than just managers."
- \$ Seek to innovate through the use of technical assistance. Ideas may become future promising practices. One locality has experienced great success with the issues of compliance and "gray areas" by generating and submitting helpful solutions with requests for technical assistance, which have been enthusiastically received by their state and federal partners.

⇒ **Legislation**

- \$ Encourage the involvement of state legislatures. For example, facilitate the passage of state laws that support and validate WIA and the One-Stop System, or which create an umbrella agency that includes required and relevant non-required partners.
- \$ Recognize that new legislation may prompt plan modifications or expansion of partnering opportunities. For example, since the passage of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act, One-Stops may become designated Employment Networks or partner with other organizations to become Employment Networks. Employment Networks are authorized to provide services to Social Security Administration (SSA) beneficiaries in exchange for tickets (vouchers) issued by SSA.

⇒ **Timing and the spirit of seamless service**

- \$ View seamless service and unified planning as a process, not a product.
- \$ Begin the unified planning process early, recognizing that it is a sequential process where certain things have to occur before others.
- \$ Recognize that the critical part of unified planning is the meeting of partners and the development of coordinated strategies. The written plan represents only a part of what was achieved in these meetings.
- \$ View the planning process as long-term, made up of incremental steps toward greater and greater collaboration, and as ongoing, instead of something which once in place can be forgotten.

- \$ Recognize that because of its ongoing nature, seamless service will require more than one planning period. One state prefers using the term “unifying process” rather than “unified plan” as a way to stress the ongoing nature of the work.
- \$ Capitalize on the opportunity to do what may not have been possible the first time around. Tight deadlines had an adverse impact on the planning process, so future planning may be more meaningful since there is no longer the same time pressure.

⇒ **Coordination of State and Local Efforts**

- \$ Involve local governments from the beginning of the planning process.
- \$ Provide up-front assistance to Local Boards in strategic planning. One State Board had staff that went to every local area and provided on-site technical assistance during the initial drafting of local plans.
- \$ Use local unified plans to help guide creation of state unified plans. One state requires that all local areas submit unified plans before beginning its state plan.
- \$ Recognize the importance of integrating Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs at the state and local level.
- \$ Establish workgroups that include key decision makers throughout the system (state/local and public/private) and charge them with developing specific outcomes. One state established twelve such groups and found it facilitated communication and ultimately helped forge agreements with a wide range of service providers.
- \$ Coordinate training and technology development efforts. One state developed a comprehensive statewide plan for training and development. Others use a collaborative approach to information technology that includes federal, state and local partners and results in the development of guiding principles, sharing of innovations and shared applications.

⇒ **Customer focus**

- \$ Focus on the needs of customers, using focus groups, surveys, or other forms of customer feedback to determine customer expectations and needs. Use this information to guide strategy development.
- \$ Focus also on the needs of local industries to guide strategy development. One local area was approached by an industry with a strong need for a certain type of worker. In a brainstorming session on how to meet this need, many new ideas for partnering emerged.
- \$ Post the goals of the local One-Stop at the Center and post statistics on how the One-Stop is doing in meeting these goals.
- \$ Identify up-front how the various funding pieces fit together in terms of meeting customer needs rather than allotting chunks of money for individual programs.
- Consider using continuous improvement strategies to guide system development. One state uses a system based on Baldrige principles through which One-Stop Centers gain certification.

- Realize that incorporating multiple partners makes the system more flexible and less vulnerable to external changes, since these changes affect only one part of the system rather than the whole. In this way, customer needs can be met on an ongoing basis and without disruption, despite changes in external circumstances.

⇒ **Partnership**

- \$ Acknowledge at the outset that it takes time for agencies with different funding streams, mandates, cultures and management structures to collaborate and conceive of themselves as part of a unified system. Establishing new structures for working, communicating and coordinating can be very helpful in meeting these goals. For example, one state has established senior management meetings, as well as regular meetings among front-line professionals. One local area hired a consulting company to help them unify various programs and develop a common language and marketing scheme.
- Identify and capitalize on win-win situations. In many cases, partners have the same or similar goals that can be addressed collectively in a One-Stop System; however, they may not immediately recognize these commonalities. Identifying these common goals can strengthen the desire for and commitment to partnership.
- \$ Take advantage of the flexibility of TANF funds, which, in many areas, allow for the provision of a wide range of services. TANF funds can be used to work with low-income customers who have children, and WIA funds can be used for customers without children, since having children is not an eligibility requirement for receiving WIA services.
- \$ Provide ongoing staff cross training and development for all partners. Capitalize on partners' training strengths to provide staff cross training. One state mentioned that Vocational Rehabilitation does training very well, so they are engaged in this activity. One local area has a community college that acts as a host for their One-Stop Center, and the college does a lot of customized training for employers. Another local area uses partnerships to cross-train staff on working with non-native English speakers.
- Adopt a positive approach to monitoring partnership arrangements, using this as an opportunity to provide helpful feedback and recommendations.

- Identify means to develop cohesion among the partners of the One-Stop System. One state established an interagency group to establish common standards for service provision. In another state, a local area created a logo and secured signs and shirts sporting the logo. Another local area engaged in Alunch box diplomacy@B scheduling pizza parties and other events which brought partners together and enabled them to get to know each other and learn about their various strengths and skills.