



BRANDING AMERICA'S WORKFORCE NETWORK

PREFACE

This concept paper outlines initial thinking about **America's Workforce Network** and the importance of a full-scale branding and marketing campaign for the system. This document must be considered a stepping-stone to creating a more comprehensive and complete product. In consultation with you, our partners and stakeholders, we will develop a focused, comprehensive, strategic branding and marketing plan for **America's Workforce Network (AWN)**.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last six decades, various levels of government have instituted a full range of employment and training programs to address our Nation's evolving workforce development needs. Each program has served a distinct purpose, often addressing a situational concern at a specific time. Since 1994, the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) has worked with State and local entities to build a One-Stop Career Center system, which was made permanent by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). Although these efforts have made advancements in serving customers better, the programs have not fully aligned their service delivery efforts with, nor been recognized as part of, the larger workforce investment system. Even today, many programs and services appear isolated from one another, and the workforce investment system remains under-publicized. The lack of publicity and resulting lack of awareness of these services by our customers needs to be remedied. The **America's Workforce Network** brand is the means by which this can be achieved in a coordinated manner and with full collaboration between all the system's partners.

America's Workforce Network is the new name for the nationwide system that provides the information and services necessary to help workers manage their careers and employers find skilled workers. The system is a partnership among Federal, State, and local governments, the private sector, labor organizations, educational institutions, and community- and faith-based organizations that provide accessible and consistently available services. However, beyond integrating and streamlining programs, **AWN** partners must similarly integrate messages and publicize efforts if the people we seek to serve are to know how and where to fully access vital services.

Because the general public still perceives the system as exclusively for the unemployed and economically disadvantaged, workers and employers alike tend to view the public workforce investment system as a place solely to assist in job placement. Among other goals, the branding campaign will work to change this common misperception, and brand the system as one available and beneficial to all people at all levels.

To fully achieve this level of integration and collaboration, every partner must commit to participating in and building an effective and sustainable system. Our challenge, therefore, is to inform customers of the network about the newly integrated and seamlessly delivered services. By reinforcing this message, and the overall visibility of services, we can help assure that **America's Workforce Network** is the first name that comes to mind when workforce needs arise.

II. WHY BRAND?

A successful brand embodies the vital message and underlying values of a product. A familiar brand can easily identify a product, inspire consumer confidence, and communicate value. If successful, the **AWN** brand will reflect the breadth and scope of this nationwide effort, and will communicate the consistency and added value of the **AWN's** workforce development services working together. All customers will know what to expect when they see the **AWN** logo. Like the United Way, General Motors, or Johnson & Johnson, many products or services are delivered under their logo, but each still has their own individual name, market, and promotional material.

For the AWN brand to succeed, more is needed than the placement of a logo. A logo is a visually significant part of the overall branding strategy, but a logo alone will not capture the value of the Network or inspire the customer loyalty necessary for advancing common goals. As partners, we must first help determine the added value -- beyond accessible and consistently available services - and then help launch a comprehensive branding and marketing strategy to communicate these values to the public.

The branding campaign must present clear and consistent messages. To be successful, as well as to leverage current investments and generate broader public awareness and understanding of the products and services provided, the **AWN** brand must successfully communicate one comprehensive, unified, and focused message.

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Local One-Stops will benefit from being perceived as part of a nationwide workforce investment system. Likewise, today's highly mobile workforce and multi-national companies will know that whether they are in large or small States, rural or urban communities, Alabama or Wyoming, a local One-Stop will consistently give them access to a full range of integrated workforce services. The **AWN** brand will distinguish each local One-Stop as a valuable member of a nationwide network of workforce services providers.

Strengthen awareness of available products and services. Just as companies seek optimal placement for their products on store shelves, we must make the public aware of the new system of service delivery. In addition to making the public aware of these services, we must emphasize their availability and the system's capacity to meet their workforce needs. As stated earlier, **America's Workforce Network** should be the first name that comes to mind when workforce needs arise. Through the support of national efforts like the Toll Free Help Line and America's Career Kit, each State and locality will benefit from participation in **AWN**.

III. THE A WN BRAND

America's Workforce Network is currently a well-kept secret. The workforce investment system must announce its' commitment to an integrated set of services to address the workforce needs of communities across America. The Department of Labor has committed to a branding campaign that will highlight the **AWN** strengths, announce a more integrated and customer friendly strategy of addressing workforce needs, and counter misconceptions. As a Federal partner, the Department of Labor has taken the lead in creating the brand and developing a marketing strategy, but this is merely the first of many efforts to ensure that strategies are developed through a collaborative process.

P *Highlighting strengths.* State and local flexibility, and a strong role for Local Boards and the private sector in the workforce investment system, helps assure that local needs are addressed within this nationwide system. The branding campaign will reinforce to workers that, through the extensive range of services available at their local One-Stop, they are able to take a more active role in attaining the skills and training they need to qualify for jobs in today's labor market. In addition, the campaign will inform employers that the new **AWN** will be an essential resource for successfully hiring, training, and retaining a pool of skilled employees.

Although the partners in the One-Stop Career centers may vary between States and localities, a consistent menu of dependable services remains, including career counseling and assessment, employer and job seeker access to automated job postings, information on job trends, assistance in filling unemployment insurance claims, and help in finding federal or State financial assistance for training programs.

No matter where a job seeker or employer first enters the workforce development system, they should quickly find that **America's Workforce Network** offers an expansive range of options. And unlike other employment services, including the hundreds of on-line web sites, members of **America's Workforce Network** are right around the corner -- fully available for in-person consultation and assistance. **AWN** not only provides workers with a continuum of services, but also the individualized attention that guides them through the learning process and enhances their market viability and overall employability. Likewise, **AWN** gives employers the same personalized attention, ensuring that they have a broader understanding of current and future labor market intelligence, wage comparisons, and opportunities to increase the skill levels of incumbent workers. This is a vital resource, and the branding campaign should help raise the awareness of the American public.

P *Announcing an Innovative Strategy.* The branding strategy will announce the workforce development system's commitment to a more coherent and systematic approach to service delivery and to meeting local workforce needs.

P *Countering misconceptions.* As stated, many still view the system as exclusively for the unemployed and economically disadvantaged. The branding campaign will work to change this and other common perceptions and brand the system as one available to anyone.

IV. BRANDING STRATEGIES

There is a full commitment to the branding strategy. As a federal partner, the Department of Labor has initiated the creation of the **AWN** brand, including a logo for use by the **AWN** partners and grantees. Federal, State and local partners will assist in determining the scope of branding efforts and will help decide who should be identified with the **AWN** brand. After we collectively establish a clear branding and co-branding strategy, together we will launch a full-scale marketing campaign to ensure that every stakeholder is aware of **AWN** guidelines and expectations for conveying the branding message.

The branding strategy will outline steps to effectively inform, educate, and mobilize internal and external target audiences. The strategy will present ideas for developing internal training and **AWN** campaign curriculum materials; inspiring support and involvement among partners and key stakeholders; emphasizing **AWN** tangible qualities with clear, uncomplicated themes and messages; and actively engaging partners in all aspects of message development and implementation. Only through the feedback, advice, and concerns of stakeholders will the partners be equipped to develop an inclusive and collaborative branding strategy for **AWN**.

The **AWN branding campaign will supplement current efforts.** The campaign will supplement local activities by connecting them to both the nationwide effort and a broader array of resources without usurping the local identity. Whether it is called “Michigan Works!”, “WorkSource,” or any other name, each member of **AWN** will have the value-added strength of the nationwide brand and marketing efforts behind it.

V. CONCLUSION

AWN system stakeholders will help shape the marketing and branding campaign. The branding strategy will be instrumental in conveying the **AWN** message to the American public, so it is necessary for stakeholders to collectively determine the values behind the message. Although the core concept of **America’s Workforce Network** has been developed, input from all partners is needed to determine the scope of the message and the underlying values of the collaboration. Federal, State and local collaboration is crucial to assure that the marketing and branding strategy reflects the needs and expectations of those on the frontline.