

**Strategic Planning
Technical Assistance**

**To The Coosa Valley
Regional Development Center**

**A Workplace Information
Employer Survey**

Prepared by

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The Usery Center for the Workplace
Georgia State University
Atlanta, Georgia

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Mission Statement

The Usery Center for the Workplace

“Applying the lessons of research and experience
today,
through consulting, teaching, training,
and facilitating, to build the innovative and
rewarding workplace of *tomorrow*.”

Bill Usery

The W. J. Usery, Jr. Center for the Workplace was founded in 1997, to institutionalize the unique perspective and experience of former Secretary of Labor Bill Usery over a career of more than 50 years in the field of employee-employer relations. With the encouragement and support of Dr. Carl Patton, President of Georgia State University, one of America’s leading urban research institutions, Mr. Usery endowed the Center with the objective of furthering his lifelong dedication to improving the effectiveness, productivity, competitiveness, and quality of work life of the American worker.

The Usery Center’s mission emphasizes outreach to the academic, practitioner, and government communities, and to the general public, to encourage the kind of cooperation between employees and employers that will enable us to maintain and improve the American workplace. The Center seeks to increase awareness of the dramatic economic changes that are taking place in the global marketplace, and the critical need for the American workplace to change to meet and accommodate these changes. In all its activities, the Center uses a multi-disciplinary, “real-world” approach, working with the other academic departments within the university and an extensive network of corporate and government agency affiliates.

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Background

The Usery Center for the Workplace at Georgia State University recently conducted two studies on workforce development. The studies surveyed employers in Cartersville, Georgia and surrounding Bartow and Paulding¹ Counties, and in Tupelo, Mississippi² and surrounding Lee County. One conclusion of the studies was that in the normal course of business, employers generate information critical for workforce development and planning. Another important conclusion was that most employers would voluntarily share the information they have with workforce planners if reasonable confidentiality safeguards exist.

Following the Cartersville study, the Coosa Valley Regional Development Center (CVRDC) asked the Usery Center for help in developing the CVRDC strategic plan. Usery Center researchers³ met with officials of the CVRDC⁴ to identify areas where the Usery Center could provide technical assistance. After lengthy discussion, the CVRDC initially identified the following four areas.

1. Ways to elicit earlier notice from employers of anticipated lay-offs, plant closings, and expansions.
2. Methodologies helpful in identifying companies at “high risk” for closure.
3. How to identify future employers moving into the area.
4. Techniques to educate employers about Workforce Investment Act services offered by the One-Stop System.

¹ Georgia Workforce Development Pilot Study, Usery Center for the Workplace, Sept. 30, 2002.

² Sharing Workplace Information, Usery Center for the Workplace, January 2, 2003.

³ Dr. Stanley Sloan and Dr. Leslie Hough representing the Usery Center; (Pete Fleming, Director of the Office of Workforce Security for the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (ETA); and Darlene Stodolski, LMI Regional Coordinator.

⁴ Gwen Dellinger, CVRDC Workforce Development Director; Karen Howell; CVRDC Workforce Development Coordinator; and Susan Gentry, CVRDC Workforce Development Planner.

From those four areas, the CVRDC engaged the Usery Center to identify ways to elicit earlier notice from employers of anticipated lay-offs, plant closings, and expansions, and learn how much the employers knew about the services offered by the One-Stop System. In that regard, the Usery Center conducted a limited, exploratory pilot study covering five Coosa valley counties to:

1. Identify the conditions under which employers would provide more advance notice of layoffs, plant closings, and expansions.
2. Identify factors or conditions that employers believe will affect layoffs, plant closings, and expansions.
3. Determine what the employers knew about services offered by the One-Stop System

Approach

The Usery Center reviewed information from a variety of sources including CVRDC material and relevant published reports such as the February 2002 “Voice of the Employer” that summarizes information from employer focus groups published by the U.S. Department of Labor Region 3 States.

Additionally, The Usery Center interviewed staff members from the Atlanta based U. S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) to discuss recent trends, issues and problems regarding employer advance notice. The Usery Center researchers purposely selected staff members familiar with the federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notice (WARN) Act.

A focus group comprised of CVRDC and GDOL Career Center staff members voiced their perspectives about advance notice issues, trends, and practices. Usery Center researchers then developed survey questions in four categories: Layoffs, Expansions, Closures and General, and shared them with the staff of ETA and GDOL for comment. Once again, Usery Center researchers made sure that ETA and GDOL staff selected for collaboration on the employer questions were also familiar with the WARN legislation.

The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) agreed to collaborate on the employer survey questions and then entered the questions into their custom written Technology Assisted Group Solutions (TAGS) computer program. The TAGS program allows survey respondents to enter answers directly into a database using a computer terminal. The program then tabulates the results of

the survey, calculates statistical parameters, and prints a report using both text and bar graphs.

On May 16, 2003, a small group of employers from the Coosa Valley and selected CVRDC staff members⁵ participated in a test of the survey conducted at Kennesaw State University. The purpose of the test was to:

1. Verify the accuracy and viability of the software and technology developed by FMCS.
2. Ascertain CVRDC staff member's perceptions about their employer community to compare with the results of the actual survey.

The test participants discussed the issues in detail following the taking of the survey. Feedback from this focus group gave Usery Center researchers the opportunity to further refine the questions before the actual survey.

After the CVRDC consulted with key stakeholders, such as local Chambers of Commerce, on the proposed employer sample, the Usery Center prepared a letter⁶ inviting employers to participate in the survey. The CVRDC then sent the letter to selected employers asking them to participate in the survey.

Usery Center researchers conducted the survey at five locations⁷ in five different counties selected from the fifteen counties comprising the Coosa Valley Region. The facilities utilized included computer labs at four Technical Colleges, and the Dalton, Georgia One-Stop office. This strategy permitted the Usery Center researchers to conduct focus groups and confer with the participants as part of the survey process. An additional number of employers took the survey over the Internet from their respective offices.

⁵ Participants by county: Whitfield, 2; Bartow, 2; Floyd, 5; Gilmer, 2.

⁶ See Exhibit 2

⁷ Sites selected were in Bartow, Floyd, Pickens, Whitfield, and Walker counties.

The focus group sessions sought to:

1. Better understand employers' willingness (or reluctance) to provide advance notice layoffs, plant closings, and expansions.
2. Identify the conditions under which employers would provide more advance notice of expected changes in employment.
3. Identify what factors or conditions employers consider likely to have a major impact on layoffs, plant closings, and expansions during the next twelve months.
4. Identify employer knowledge and interests concerning employer related services provided through the GDOL One-Stop System.

At each session, Usery Center researchers provided an introductory letter⁸ that explained the purpose of the survey and assured the employers that their responses would be confidential. Since respondents were not entering any personal or company identification, responses could not be associated with a particular participant or company.

UC researchers conducted two surveys and focus groups per day between May 20 and 22, 2003. Each session consisted of selected employers representing major sectors of their respective counties' economies.

⁸ See Exhibit 3.

Findings

Regarding Expansion⁹

1. Over three-fourths of the employers are willing to provide up to 6 months notice of an expansion.
2. When asked what factors would influence a decision to expand, half of the employers indicated sales orders and the overall health of the economy are the most important factors. Nineteen percent responded that legislative decisions are the most important factor in deciding whether to expand.

Regarding Lay-offs¹⁰

1. Among the employers, poor sales and the overall health of the economy were the factors or conditions most likely to affect the decision to downsize their workforce. Once again, nineteen percent of the respondents mentioned legislative decisions as the most important factor.
2. Among the thirty-one percent of the employers whose business experienced a downsizing in the past twelve months, almost half cited sales and the overall health of the economy as the most important reasons.
3. Seventy-one percent of the employers would be willing to provide the local Career Center with advanced notice of a lay-off.
4. Confidentiality, when coupled with other conditions, substantially increases employer's willingness to give advance notice of an impending layoff. For example:

⁹ See Exhibit 5

¹⁰ See Exhibit 6

- a. Eighty-two percent of the respondents were willing to give advanced notice of a pending layoff if the One-Stop System could maintain confidentiality and help re-train employees for other work.
- b. Ninety-eight percent were willing to give advance notice of a pending layoff if the One-Stop System could maintain confidentiality and their employees continued to work until the layoff.
- c. Ninety-three percent of the respondents were willing to give advance notice if the One-Stop System could maintain confidentiality and there were appropriate job openings elsewhere for their employees.
- d. Ninety-six percent were willing to give advance notice of a pending layoff if the One-Stop System could maintain confidentiality and help develop a plan to assist the employers and their employees.

Regarding Closures¹¹

1. Two-thirds of the employers say they are willing to give advanced notice of a closure, however, a significant number (one-fourth) remain undecided as to whether or under what conditions they would willingly give notice.
2. When asked the reason most likely to inhibit their willingness to provide advanced notice of a closure, thirty-eight percent cited confidentiality, while the same number cited other undisclosed reasons.
3. As in the case of lay-offs, when coupled with other conditions, confidentiality is an important factor in the decision to provide advanced notice of a closure. For example:

¹¹ See Exhibit 7

- a. Eighty percent of the respondents are willing to give advance notice of closures if the One-Stop System maintains confidentiality and finds appropriate job openings for their employees elsewhere.
 - b. Eighty-four percent would be willing to give advanced notice if the One-Stop System maintains confidentiality and their employees continue to work until the closure.
 - c. Eighty-four percent are willing to give advanced notice of a closure if the One-Stop System maintains confidentiality and the One-Stop System retrains their employees for other work elsewhere.
4. More than half of the employers surveyed have little or no familiarity with the WARN Act.
 5. Employers cited poor sales or a decision from higher levels as reasons for a closure of their business.

General Information¹²

1. Two-thirds of participating employers are not familiar or only somewhat familiar with the One-Stop System services.
2. In spite of the above finding, sixty-two percent would be willing to use the services of the One-Stop System to help them respond to changes in their workforce.
3. The preponderance of employers (eighty-three percent) would like more information on the services available from the One-Stop System.
4. With confidentiality assured, over half of the employers surveyed (sixty percent) would consult with the One-Stop System in order to receive help in averting a lay-off or closure.

¹² See Exhibit 4

5. Most employers (eighty-five percent) have not used the services of the One-stop System to help in a lay-off, closure or expansion within the last three years.
6. Three fourths of employers do not expect a significant change (ten percent or greater) in their workforce in the next twelve months.
7. Eight percent of the respondents expect their workforce to increase in the next twelve months.
8. Half of the employers anticipate the need to update or upgrade the skills of their workforce in the next one to three years. Two-thirds of the respondents indicate they are willing to use the services of the One-Stop System when upgrading is required.
9. There is significant optimism among employers on the direction of the national and local economy in the next twelve months. Three-fourths think the national economy will improve and two-thirds think their local economy will improve.

Conclusions

1. General Conclusions: Employers continue to express their willingness to participate in the workforce investment system by providing critical information helpful to workforce planners. This conclusion is similar to the conclusions made in both the Cartersville and Tupelo studies cited on page four of this report.

Substantial increases in the lead-time provided by employers for notices to the CVRDC concerning expansions, layoffs, and closures is possible even for those companies not covered by the WARN Act.

Confidentiality concerning expansions, layoffs, and closures as well as the well being of their employees during periods of changing employment is very important to employers and improves their willingness to provide early notice of such events.

Most surveyed employers do not understand or utilize the service of the One-Stop System. This conclusion corroborates the conclusions in the previously cited Cartersville and Tupelo Studies.

2. Expansions: There is more willingness on employers' part to give earlier notice of expansions than there is to give earlier notice of either layoffs or closures. Usery Center researchers conclude that employers view expansions as positive events, with less downside risk than revealing the intent to downsize or close operations.

Employers generally understand that the One-Stop System is a source for employees, and that is an incentive for employers to involve the One-Stop System early in planning for an expansion. Confidentiality until the company decides to reveal their plans is mentioned as important to the employers.

Another key consideration for employers to use the one stop system is credibility. Employers need to be confident that the One-Stop System would provide them potential employees who can and will do the required work. Obviously, employers who have a good experience hiring employees through the One-Stop System are more likely to use that system in the future for other things as well. Conversely, an unsatisfactory experience will undermine the One-Stop System credibility and serve as a disincentive to participate in other programs such as providing advance notice of changing employment requirements.

The most significant reasons given for expansion were strong sales orders and overall health of the economy. Significant optimism among the employers on the direction of the national and local economy over the next 12 months suggests that some expansion may be reality in the near future.

3. Layoffs: The central issue with early disclosure of pending layoffs is confidentiality. Employers believe that there is significant risk to revealing contemplated layoffs well in advance. They perceive that they can suffer damage in a number of ways including unfounded rumors, employees leaving prematurely, damage to the morale of the remaining workforce, and increased demands from worried creditors and suppliers.

Reducing the risk of damage and providing increased employee benefits increases the willingness of employers to give more advance notice. The survey revealed that the highest degree of willingness to provide advanced notice occurred when a plan to assist both the employer and their employees was offered. It is presumed that if these or other incentives (e.g., re-training subsidies, financial relief from taxes) were tied to earlier notice of intent to lay off, employers would be much more willing to comply with the needs of workforce planners to provide such notice.

Employers cite lower sales, the health of the economy, and other matters generally considered external to the company, as the most likely factors to precipitate a layoff.

4. Closure: A smaller percentage of employers are willing to provide advanced notice about closures than either expansions or layoffs. Apparently, employers view the risk of damage from early notice is greater for closures than for either layoffs or expansions. Assuring confidentiality and providing opportunities that are helpful to the employees, increases the willingness of employers to provide advance notice of a closure. The most often cited reasons for a closure were slowing sales and a decision from higher levels.

It is widely believed in the Turnaround Industry that the majority of business failures are due to internal factors¹³. Despite the opportunity to suggest any number of internal factors that could lead to layoffs and closures, such as old technology, excessive costs or excessive leverage, respondents chose only to mention external factors. Researchers conclude that some respondents are relating what factors make the consequences of internal issues more visible. The alternatives offered in the survey may have biased the respondents in this direction. Respondents whose responsibility is only in human resources may not be familiar enough with the operations to recognize internal factors leading to closure. Others might perceive that citing only external factors is the most politically expedient.

5. One-Stop System: Surveyed employers made positive statements about the potential of successful interaction with the One-Stop throughout all economic categories, yet fail to use the services offered by the system. Even employers familiar with the One-Stop System have not used it to any large degree. In a separate study¹⁴, over ninety percent of the eighteen hundred employers surveyed said they had not used One-Stops for recruiting, training or retention services

¹³ Principles of Corporate Renewal, Harlan D. Platt. University of Michigan Press, pg 16.

¹⁴ USDOL Business Relations Group Draft of Strategic Plan 12/13/02

Usery Center researchers conclude that the One-Stop System needs to build stronger relationships with employers. Stronger relationships require mutual trust and confidence. Early notice of impending change is more likely with mutual trust, and confidence that the services offered by the One-Stop System offset the potential negative consequences of giving the system early notice of impending change.

Since the One-Stop System will eventually have to deal with the consequences of expansions, layoffs, and closures, it is in the One-Stops Systems' best interest to identify what steps to take to correct perceived deficiencies in the relationship between the One-Stop System and the employers.

Usery Center Researchers conclude that there exists a significant need to communicate more information to the employers concerning the services offered by the One-Stop System. Usery Researchers also identified a need to refresh One-Stop employees about the steps required to engage the voluntary participation in One-Stop programs by the employers.

Recommendations

1. **The One-Stop System should intensify its efforts to:**
 - a. Identify employers who are considering downsizing or closing, and
 - b. Determine the One-Stop services that would be most beneficial to those employers and their workers.

2. **The One-Stop System should explore the feasibility of linking its services** (and incentives from other government units where appropriate), to the employers' willingness to share advance notice of anticipated workforce and other changes critical to the One-Stop System.

3. **The One-Stop System must continue to build trust and credibility with employers.** Doing so appears to be a prerequisite for employers' willingness to share information the system needs to fulfill its mission. The One-Stop System should review its confidentiality policies and make them better known to employers. Letting the employers know why the information is important to the One-Stop System and how the information is used is also important.

4. **The One-Stop System should identify areas of service that employers find most beneficial, with particular focus on basic labor exchange services, and concentrate on executing those services outstandingly well.** One strategy would be to assess the strengths and weaknesses of service delivery through staff participation in an assessment, and then strengthen any weaknesses. Also, consider focusing on expansion of services to economic sectors, which are currently underserved.

5. **The One-Stop System should intensify efforts to provide retraining, upgrading, and educational opportunities for workers currently employed.** Employers are likely to be willing to offset part of the cost and provide facilities to do the training on their premises.
6. **The One-Stop System should increase its efforts to train selected staff (e.g., marketing representatives) to educate employers about One-Stop services.** This education effort requires the same steps as any sale, including communicating:
 - What services are offered
 - How those services are valuable to the employer
 - What alternatives exist for the employer
 - What the cost of the services are
 - What the cost of the alternatives are
 - How the benefits of the One Stop services serve the business's interests better than the alternatives available.
 - Establishing trust
 - Closing the sale
7. **Consider focusing efforts on employers most likely to expand and those most likely to have a problem with layoffs and closures.** The Usery Center researchers recognize that it is far easier to make recommendations for improved education and marketing than it is to implement them. One-Stop Marketing Representatives are frequently “spread thin” in light of the number of employers they seek to visit and serve in the One-Stop's service area. In the latter regard, the One-Stop System may want to consider systematically assessing employers based on their need and likelihood of being receptive to One-Stop services.
8. **The One-Stop System must continue to earn the confidence of employers that the system can and will deliver on its promises.** Employers must be confident that One-Stop System services will contribute to business success.

Acknowledgements

The Usery Center for the Workplace at Georgia State University gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following organizations:

- 1) Vicki Henson, Project Administrator, Georgia Department of Labor, Atlanta, Georgia
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- 7) Gwen S. Dellinger, Workforce Development Director, Coosa Valley Regional Development Center, Rome, Georgia
- 8) Karen E. Howell, Workforce Development Coordinator, Coosa Valley Regional Development Center, Rome, Georgia
- 9) Northwest Technical College
- 10) Dalton One-Stop (Georgia Department of Labor)
- 11) Appalachian Technical College
- 12) North Metro Technical College
- 13) Coosa Valley Technical College

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1

Coosa Valley Economic Profile

Region 1 Population Grows Faster Than Nation, Slower Than State

- The region's population grew to 697,410 at a rate of 21.1% between 1990 and 2000. Slower than the state of Georgia, 26.4%, but faster than U.S. at 3.1% according to census information.
- Paulding is the fastest growing county in the region, nearly doubling in size between 1990 and 2000.

County	Population in 1980	Population in 1990	Population in 2000
Bartow	40,760	55,911	76,019
Catoosa	36,991	42,464	53,282
Chattooga	21,856	22,242	25,470
Dade	12,318	13,147	15,154
Fannin	14,748	15,992	19,798
Floyd	79,800	81,251	90,565
Gilmer	11,110	13,368	23,456
Gordon	30,070	35,072	44,104
Haralson	18,422	21,966	26,690
Murray	19,685	26,147	36,506
Paulding	26,110	41,611	81,678
Pickens	11,652	14,432	22,983
Polk	32,382	33,815	38,127
Walker	56,470	58,340	61,053
Whitfield	65,789	72,462	83,525
Total Population in Region 1	478,163	548,220	697,410

Unemployed Characteristics

- Those over age 40 make up over half of the long-term unemployed, with the 40-49 age group having the highest rate.

- 80% of long-term unemployed have a high school education or less – half of those lack a high school diploma. One-fifth of the long-term unemployed are college graduates.

Region 1 Is Expected to Add New Jobs Each Year

- Total employment in Region 1 is expected to reach almost 297,000 jobs by the year 2008 with more than 4200 new jobs added each year.
- Area job growth is expected to be 1.7% per year. Georgia and the nation's job growth are expected to be 2.4% and 1.4%, respectively.
- All counties in the region show a higher percentage of incoming workforce than outgoing with the exception of Fannin, Gilmer, and Pickens.
- Fannin, Gilmer, and Pickens counties have experienced a high influx of retirees.

Region 1 Workers Commute Out of Area

- The area's commuting patterns are influenced on the south by the Atlanta labor market and on the north by Chattanooga.
- Over 70% of workers in Paulding and Catoosa counties work outside their county of residence.
- Over 40% of the workers in 10 area counties commute to other Georgia counties.
- Whitfield and Floyd counties have the highest number of residents who work in their counties at 87% and 82%, respectively.

Carpet Industry Currently Remains Strong in Northwest Georgia

- This area is home to the largest concentration of tufted carpet producers in the United States.
- Mills located within a 65-mile radius of Dalton, Georgia (Whitfield, Gordon, Catoosa, Murray, and Bartow counties) supplied 80% of the U.S. carpet market.

- Over the last ten years, it produced more than half the carpet and textile mill products in Georgia.
- Whitfield County accounted for 31% of the total manufacturing establishments in the region in 1997.
- The carpet industry in our area has been fairly stable in the most recent months due to the need for residential carpet supplies. This trend is expected to continue as long as mortgage interest rates are low.

Future of Manufacturing in Georgia

- Manufacturers have traditionally found northwest Georgia an ideal location due to available workforce and its location in relation to major interstates as well as natural resources.
- 17% of the Georgia manufacturers surveyed say they are likely to move part of their operations outside the U.S. in the next five years.
- 25% of larger manufacturers, those with annual revenues of \$10 million or more, are likely to move some operations to another country by 2007.
- Only 8% of manufactures have shifted operations away from the U.S. in the last five years.
- More than 40% cited the low quality of both the state's workforce and its K-12 educational system as the most glaring drawbacks to doing business in Georgia. *(source: Survey conducted by Habif, Arogeti & Wynne in cooperation with Kennesaw State University and the Georgia Industry Association)*

Service Jobs Fastest Growing in Economy – Healthcare Faces Critical Shortage

- Computer Systems Analyst is one of Region 1's fastest growing occupations and 8th in largest number of openings.
- Another service area needing employees is education, specifically teachers K-12.

- Northwest Georgia's number one service industry need is in healthcare occupations. This is also the number one need in the entire state.
- A critical need for Registered Nurses in Region 1 was identified by a group of healthcare organization representatives. In February 2003, this group identified two sets of obstacles to increasing available Registered Nurses. The first was institutional and includes lack of class space, instructors and time and space for required clinical experience. The second related to the job itself in terms of working hours, increasing difficulty of work, and time commitment needed to obtain credentials. These factors are not entirely offset by the occupation's well-paying salary.

Exhibit 2

Coosa Valley Regional Development Center Letter of Invitation

Dear _____:

The United States Department of Labor, the Usery Center for the Workplace at Georgia State University, the Coosa Valley Regional Development Center and the Georgia Department of Labor are partnering to conduct a survey on matters of importance for the Northwest Georgia workforce. We are conducting a pilot study to identify opportunities to help employers deal effectively with changes in local workforce size and composition through the local "One-Stop" Workforce Investment System. This study seeks to: 1) better understand your willingness or reluctance to provide advance information on lay-offs, closings or expansions, 2) identify the conditions under which you would provide such information, and 3) identify the factors that you think are likely to have a major impact on a lay-off, closing or expansion. This information will be used to assist the local One-Stop system in achieving its purpose.

The local One-Stop System is a cooperative effort of agencies and organizations in the 15-county Northwest Georgia region. This effort seeks to develop a common, seamless system to provide workforce development opportunities and services to employers and job seekers.

You are cordially invited to attend a session to provide your input. The session will be held at _____ at the _____ on _____ May _____, 2003. The survey will take no longer than one and one-half hours to complete. Please call Terri Morgan at 1.800.332.1965 or email tmorgan@cvrdc.org to indicate if you can attend.

All responses to the survey will be confidential. The Usery Center will summarize overall group trends and will provide a copy of the final report to you. This information will ultimately be used to assure a trained workforce for Northwest Georgia. Thank you for your cooperation and assistance.

Sincerely,
Coosa Valley Regional Development Center

Exhibit 3

Usery Center for the Workplace Employer Survey Introduction Letter

Dear Employer:

We are here today to hear your views on matters of importance for the Northwest Georgia workforce. As your invitation stated, we are conducting a pilot study to identify opportunities to help employers deal effectively with changes in local workforce size and composition through the local “One-Stop” Workforce Investment System. This study seeks to: 1) better understand your willingness or reluctance to provide advance information on lay-offs, closings or expansions, 2) identify the conditions under which you would provide such information, 3) identify the factors that you think are likely to have a major impact on a lay-off, closing or expansion, and 4) identify potential employer interest in services to assist you meet the business challenges you face.

The local One-Stop System, a co-sponsor of this study with the U.S. Department of Labor, is a cooperative effort of agencies and organizations in the 15-county Northwest Georgia region. The local organizations include the Georgia Department of Labor, Coosa Valley Regional Development Center, local colleges, Rehabilitation Services, and Family and Children Services. This effort seeks to develop a common, seamless system to provide workforce development opportunities and services to employers and job seekers. The benefits to an employer working with the One-Stop System can be substantial particularly in times of change. For example, using One-Stop assistance to recruit and train employees can lower the employers’ hiring costs for qualified workers. Doing so also can help employers build a more qualified and skilled workforce. Sometimes an employer faces the regrettable decision to downsize (or even worse)

close. In those cases, the One-Stop System can help the employer as well as the affected employees, by rapidly responding to their respective needs. The One-Stop System can assist former workers in job transition, thereby lowering employers' costs. The system provides job retraining opportunities and expedient processing of unemployment benefits for dislocated workers.

The One-Stop System has been evolving since 1999. That System focuses on local decision-making and customer choice. As the primary and ultimate customer of the One-Stop system, your views are important. The survey today explores the possibility of obtaining workforce information to assist the local One-Stop System in achieving its mission. Your responses will be confidential. The User Center researchers will summarize overall group trends. A copy of the final report will be available to you. We encourage your candor in responding. Thank you for your cooperation and assistance.

Sincerely,

Stanley Sloan, Ph.D. CMC
Program Coordinator

Exhibit 4

Employer Questions

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What is the size of your workforce?
Less than 50
50 - 499
499 or more
2. How familiar are you with “One-Stop” System Services?
Totally familiar
Familiar
Somewhat familiar
Not at all familiar
3. Would you be willing to use the services offered through the “One-Stop” System to help you respond to changes in your workforce?
Yes
No
Undecided
4. Would you like more information on the service available to you and your workforce through the “One-Stop” System?
Yes
No
5. Would you be willing to notify the “One-Stop” System to help you avert a possible lay-off or closure if you were assured of confidentiality so that an assistance plan could be developed?
Yes
No
Undecided
6. Have you used the services of the “One-Stop” System to help you with an anticipated lay-off, closing or expansion in the last three years?
Yes
No

7. Do you anticipate significant changes (i.e. 10% or more change) in the size of your workforce in the next 12 months?
Yes
No
8. If you answered yes to question 7, specify the change.
Yes, increase
Yes, decrease
9. Would you be willing to use the service of available through the “One-Stop” System to upgrade or update the skills of your employees?
Yes
No
Undecided
10. Do you anticipate the need to upgrade or update the skills of your workforce in the next 12 months or less?
Yes
No
Undecided
11. Do you anticipate the need to upgrade or update the skills of your workforce in the next 1 to 3 years?
Yes
No
Undecided
12. Do you anticipate the need to upgrade or update the skills of your workforce more than 3 years from now?
Yes
No
Undecided
13. Do you think the national economy will improve in the next twelve months?
Yes
No
Undecided
14. Do you think the economy in your local county will improve in the next twelve months?
Yes
No
Undecided

EXPANSION QUESTIONS

15. Would you be willing to provide the local Career Center (Georgia Department of Labor) with advanced notice of an expansion?

Yes

No

Undecided

If “No” or “Undecided” please explain below:

16. If you answered yes to question 15, how much advanced notice would you be willing to provide to your local Career Center (Georgia Department of Labor)?

1 month or less

1 – 2 months

3 – 6 months

7 – 9 months

17. What factor/condition do you think is most likely to influence a decision to expand your workforce? Select the most important factor from the following list:

Foreign competition

Domestic competition

Sales orders

Overall health of the economy

Decision from higher level

Legislative

Technology in your business

Other, please specify

18. What factor or condition do you think is most likely to influence your willingness to provide a Career Center (Georgia Department of Labor) advanced notice of an expansion in your workforce? Select the most important types of outside advice, assistance or cooperation:

Confidentiality

Upgrading your employees skills

Remedial education (e.g. language, GED)

Training new hires

Financial incentives

Recruiting and assessing candidates

LAY-OFF QUESTIONS

19. What factor/condition do you think is most likely to influence a decision to downsize (e.g. lay-off) your workforce? Select the most important factor from the following list:
- Foreign competition
 - Domestic competition
 - Sales orders
 - Overall health of the economy
 - Decision for higher level
 - Legislative decision
 - Technology in your business
 - Other, please explain
20. Has your business experienced a lay-off or downsizing during the past 12 months?
- Yes
 - No
21. If yes, what factor contributed most to that lay-off or downsizing? Select the most important factor from the following list:
- Foreign competition
 - Domestic competition
 - Sales orders
 - Overall health of the economy
 - Decision from higher level
 - Legislative decision
 - Technology in your business
 - Other, please explain
22. Would you be willing to provide the local Career Center (Georgia Department of Labor) with advanced notice of a lay-off?
- Yes
 - No
 - Undecided
- If “No” or “Undecided” please explain below:

23. How much advanced notice would you be willing to provide to your local Career Center (Georgia Department of Labor)?
- 1 month or less
 - 1 – 2 months
 - 3 – 6 months
 - 7 – 9 months
 - None
24. Would you be willing to provide the local Career Center with advanced notice of a lay-off if you were assured of confidentiality and if your employees could be trained for other work?
- Yes
 - No
 - Undecided
- If “No” or “Undecided” please explain below:
25. Would you be willing to provide the local Career Center with advanced notice of a lay-off if you were assured of confidentiality and your employees would continue working until the lay-off?
- Yes
 - No
 - Undecided
- If “No” or “Undecided” please explain below:
26. Would you be willing to provide the local Career Center with advanced notice of a lay-off if you were assured of confidentiality and there were appropriate job openings elsewhere for your employees?
- Yes
 - No
 - Undecided
- If “No” or “Undecided” please explain below:
27. Would you be willing to provide the local Career Center with advanced notice of a lay-off if you were assured of confidentiality working with the Career Center in developing a plan to assist you and your employees?
- Yes
 - No
 - Undecided

If “No” or “Undecided” please explain below:

28. Under what conditions would you be willing to provide advanced notice of a lay-off to the local Career Center (Georgia Department of Labor)?

Please comment:

CLOSURE QUESTIONS

29. Would you be willing to provide the local Career Center (Georgia Department of Labor) with advanced notice of the closure of your business?

Yes

No

Undecided

If “No” or “Undecided” please explain below:

30. If you answered no to question 29, which of the following reasons would most likely inhibit you from providing advanced notice?

Confidentiality

Potential loss of employees

Financial loss

Reputation

It’s nobody’s business

Other, please explain

31. Would you be willing to provide the local Career Center with advanced notice of a closure if you were assured of confidentiality and there were appropriate job openings elsewhere for your employees?

Yes

No

Undecided

If “No” or “Undecided” please explain below

32. Would you be willing to provide the local Career Center with advanced notice of a closure if you were assured of confidentiality and if the “One-Stop” System could retrain your employees for other work elsewhere?

Yes

No

Undecided

If “No” or “Undecided” please explain below:

33. Would you be willing to provide the local Career Center with advanced notice of a closure if you were assured of confidentiality and your employees would continue working until the closure?

Yes

No

Undecided

If “No” or “Undecided” please explain below:

34. Under what conditions would you be willing to provide advanced notice of a closure to the local Career Center (Georgia Department of Labor)?

Please comment:

35. Are you familiar with the federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notice (WARN) Act which requires certain categories of employers to provide 60 days advanced notice of lay-offs and closures?

Totally familiar

Familiar

Somewhat familiar

Not at all familiar

36. What factor/condition do you think is most likely to influence a decision to close your business? Select the most important factor from the following list:

Foreign competition

Domestic competition

Sales orders

Overall health of the economy

Decision from higher level

Legislative decision

Technology in your business

Other, please explain

Exhibit 5: Workplace Information Study General Questions

<i>GENERAL QUESTIONS</i>	#	<50	%	50-499	%	500+	%	Tot fam.	%	Fam.	%	Some what fam.	%	Not fam.	%	Yes	%	No	%	Und	%
1. What is the size of your workforce?	48	18	37.5	20	41.6	10	20.8														
2. How familiar are you with the "One-Stop" system services?	48							8	16.6	10	20.8	7	14.5	23	47.9						
3. Would you be willing to use the services offered through the "One-Stop" System to help you respond to changes in your workforce?	47															29	62	1	2	17	36
4. Would you like more information on the services available to you and your workforce through the "One-Stop" System?	47															39	83	8	17		
5. Would you be willing to notify the "One-Stop System to help you avert a possible lay-off or closure if you were assured of confidentiality so that an assistance plan could be developed?	48															29	60	5	10	14	29
6. Have you used the services of the "One-Stop" system to help you with an anticipated lay-off, closing or expansion in the last three years?	48															7	15	41	85		
7. Do you anticipate significant changes (i.e. 10% or more change) in the size of your workforce in the next 12 months?	48															11	23	37	77		

Workplace Information Study: General Questions (continued)

<i>General Questions</i>	#	Yes	%	No	%	Und	\$	N/A	%	Increase	%	Decline	%
8. If you answered yes to question 7, specify the change.	30							19	63	8	27	3	10
9. Would you be willing to use the services available through the "One-Stop" system to upgrade or update the skills of your workforce ?	48	31	65	3	6	14	29						
10. Do you anticipate the need to upgrade or update the skills of your workforce in the next 12 months?	48	24	50	14	29	10	21						
11. Do you anticipate the need to upgrade or update the skills of your workforce in the next 1 to 3 years?	47	33	70	6	13	8	17						
12. Do you anticipate the need to upgrade or update the skills of your workforce more than 3 years from now?	48	31	65	4	8	13	27						
13. Do you think the national economy will improve in the next 12 months?	48	37	77	4	8	7	15						
14. Do you think the economy in your local county will improve in the next twelve months?	48	31	65	2	4	15	31						

Exhibit 6: Workplace Information Survey Expansion Questions

<i>EXPANSION QUESTIONS</i>	Resp	Yes	%	No	%	Und	%	<1 mo.	%	1-2 mo.	%	3-6 mo.	%	7-9 mo.	%	None	%
15. Would you be willing to provide the local Career Center (Georgia Department of Labor) with advanced notice of an expansion?	48	43	89.5	2	4.1	3											
16. If you answered yes to question 15, how much advanced notice would you be willing to provide to your local Career Center (Georgia Department of Labor)?	43							14	32.5	9	20.9	14	32.5	4	9.3	2	4.6
	Resp	For. Comp.	%	Dom. Comp.	%	Sales	%	Econ.	%	Dec. Hi. Lvl.	%	Leg.	%	Tech.	%	Other	%
17. What factor/condition do you think is most likely to influence a decision to expand your workforce? Select the most important factor from the following list:	48	1	2.0		0	17	35.4	8	16.6	8	16.6	9	18.7		0	5	10.4
	Resp	Conf.	%	Up. Skl.	%	Rem. Ed.	%	Train. New	%	Fin. Inc.	%	Rec. Cand.	%				
18. What factor or condition do you think is most likely to influence your willingness to provide a local Career Center (Georgia Department of Labor) advanced notice of an expansion in your workforce? Select the most important type of outside advice, assistance or cooperation:	44	9	20.4	7	15.9	1	2.2	2	4.5	6	13.6	19	43.1				

Exhibit 7: Workplace Information Study Lay-off Questions

<i>LAY-OFF QUESTIONS</i>	Resp	Foreign Comp.	%	Domestic Comp.	%	Poor Sales	%	Econ.	%	decis. Hi. Lvl.	%	Legis.	%	Tech.	%	Other	%
19. What factor/condition do you think is most likely to influence a decision to downsize your workforce (e.g. lay-off)? Select from the following list:	48	1	2.0	1	2.0	12	25	19	39.5	9	18.7	9	18.7		0	6	12.5
	Resp	Yes	%	No	%												
20. Has your business experienced a lay-off or a downsizing during the past 12 months?	48	15	31.2	33	68.7												
	Resp				For. Comp.	%	Dom. Comp.	Econ.	%	Decis. Hi. Lvl.	%	Leg.	%	Tech.	%	Other	%
21. If "Yes", what factor contributed most to that lay-off or downsizing? Select the most important factor from the following list:	19		0	1	5.2	4	21.0	5	26.3	3	15.7	5	26.3		0	1	5.26
	Resp	Yes	%	No	%	Und	%	<1 mo.	%	1-2 mo.	%	3-6 mo.	%	7-9 mo.	%	None	%
22. Would you be willing to provide the local Career Center (Georgia Department of Labor) with advanced notice of a lay-off?	48	34	70.8	5	10.4	9	18.7										
23. How much advanced notice of a lay-off would you be willing to provide to your local Career Center (Georgia Department of Labor)?	45							17	37.7	11	24.4	10	22.2	1	2.22	6	13.3
24. Would you be willing to provide the local Career Center with advanced notice of a lay-off if you were assured of confidentiality and if your employees could be retrained for other work?	45	37	82.2	2	4.4	6	13.3										
25. Would you be willing to provide advanced notice of a lay-off if you were assured of confidentiality and your employees would continue working until the lay-off?	45	44	97.7	1	2.2		0										
26. Would you be willing to provide advanced notice of a lay-off if you were assured of confidentiality and there were appropriate job openings elsewhere for your employees?	45	42	93.3	1	2.2	2	4.4										
27. Would you be willing to provide advanced notice of a lay-off if you were assured of confidentiality working with the Career Center in developing a plan to assist you and your employees ?	45	43	95.5	1	2.2	1	2.2										

Exhibit 8: Workplace Information Survey Closure Questions

<i>CLOSURE QUESTIONS</i>	Resp.	Yes	%	No	%	Und.	%										
29. Would you be willing to provide the local Career Center (Georgia Department of Labor) with advanced notice of the closure of your business?	45	30	66.6	4	8.8	11	24.4										
	Resp.	Confid.	%	Empl. Loss.	%	Fin. Loss	%	Rep.	%	Nobody Bus.	%	Other	%				
30. If you answered yes to question 29, which of the following reasons would most likely inhibit you from providing advanced notice?	16	6	37.5	1	6.2	3	18.7		0		0	6	37.5				
	Resp.	Yes	%	No	%	Und.	%	T. Fam.	%	Fam.	%	S.Fam.	%	N.Fam.	%		
31. Would you be willing to provide advanced notice of a closure if you were assured of confidentiality and there were appropriate job openings elsewhere for your employees?	45	36	80	3	6.6	6	13.3										
32. Would you be willing to provide advanced notice of a closure if you were assured of confidentiality and your employees would continue working until the closure?	45	38	84.4	2	4.4	5	11.1										
33. Would you be willing to provide the local Career Center with advanced notice of a closure if you were assured of confidentiality and if the One-Step System could retrain your employees for other work elsewhere?	44	37	84.0	2	4.5	5	11.3										
35. Are you familiar with the federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notice (WARN) Act, which requires certain categories of employers to provide 60 days advanced notice of lay-offs and closures?	48							6	12.5	14	29.1	13	27.0	15	31.2		
	Resp	For. Comp.	%	Dom. Comp.	%	Sales	%	Econ.	%	Dec. Hi. Lvl.	%	Leg.	%	Tech.	%	Other	%
36. What factor/condition do you think is most likely to influence a decision to close your business? Select the most important factor.	45	1	2.2	2	4.4	11	24.4	4	8.8	12	26.6	12	26.6	1	2.2	2	4.4

Exhibit 9

Employer Focus Group Sample Responses

Question 1: How did you feel about participating?

“The system was user friendly.”

“There should be more than one factor/condition in the response.”

“Many questions not apply to my situation, we are a small bank and have a stable workforce.”

“Closure questions did not fit my industry.” (Public education)

“The system is user friendly.”

“Answering by computer with no I.D. is a feeling of more Confidentiality.” (Small closely held company)

“The questions are a little different for a school system.”

“The technology is great, very easy.”

“Prefer a computer survey over hard copy.”

“Questions were thought provoking. A different thought process between lay-off and closure. Closure a more severe situation. More inclined to give advanced notice on closure.”

“Redundancy of questions. Answered the same way each time. Thought of multiple benefits in each case.”

“The process is very easy.”

Question 2: Why do you think employers are reluctant to give advanced notice?

“Fear of employee panic in a small community.”

“Fear of community panic in a small community.”

“Misinformation spreads especially in a small community resulting in disruptions. Any good news following is not believed.”

“Employers hope to hold on to business until the last minute and retain employees.”

“They don’t want information out into the community. It can create the perception of abandoning employees. Some employees will not return to work or will take time off.”

“Do not want anyone to know because still want to collect on accounts receivable especially the slower paying customers.”

“Fear of losing customers.”

“A perception that big is better. Downsizing suggests that something is wrong. A negative image in a win, win situation”

“Need employees until the very end.”

Employees panic.”

“May accelerate the process. If employees think they will be laid off they will leave.”

“If expanding employees will wonder if retraining will be required; employees concern how change will affect them.”

“Most employers don’t know what is available to help them or their employees.”

“Where there are hazardous environments; employers fear that an employee will retaliate.”

“The impact on clients. Negative effect in a professional services organization.” (ex. CPA firm)

“Sometimes don’t know whether slowdown is long term or short and want to know whether or not trend is solid.”

“Confidentiality very important in a small community. If advanced notice given an inadvertent comment will get the word out to the community.” “You do not have the best interests of my employees as I do. I don’t want to bring some one from the outside who does not know the employees.”

“Must have confidentiality, if not then havoc and rampant rumors causes stress on employees. The employee/manager relationship will be jeopardized. The whole process would be jeopardized as well as confidence in management.”

“Employees will look for another job prematurely.”

“Don’t release too early because something may change.”

“If sure of closure, let employees know in advance in order to find help for employees.”

“Try to minimize impact on people’s lives. Don’t jerk people around. Need a good relationship if business will close.”

Question 3. What do you think it would take to induce employers to provide advanced notice about closure, lay-off or expansion?

“Get to know more about the One-stop system.”

“More communication with the One-Stop.”

“In some organizations there is in a small group of decision makers who need to know about the One-Stop.”

“Employers should be more active in local employer networking in the community, for example, the Georgia Employer Committee.”

“Wrinkle cream doesn’t do any good in the tube.” (Reference to CVRDC)

“Get the word out on what services are available in the One-Stop system.”

“Employer suites in the One-Stop where employers could conduct confidential interviews for prospective employees.” (Neutral ground, off premises)

“Misperception that there is a lot of red tape in the One-Stop”

“If an employer knows that other employers are doing it, he/she also will.”

“Put as much information on line as possible, make it convenient for employer.”

“Connect employers with training, make it easy for employers.”

“Local employer committee helps in marketing One-Stop services. Seminar topics of interest to employers draw attendance, build trust between employer community and the One-Stop.”

What do you think it would take to induce employers to provide advanced notice about closure, lay-off or expansion?

“Confidentiality.”

“If business was to receive assistance that was beneficial in addition to the employees’ benefits.”

“Financial incentive to the employer.”

“No such thing as confidentiality especially in a small community Employees know of a lay-off before it happens.”

(Participant question: “Why does the One-Stop need advanced notice?”)

“Need a comfort level with the One-Stop staff so that can be assured of confidentiality and work with them”

“More knowledge about the One-Stop would help. Didn’t know about it until the WIB.”

“Education of employers through speakers at civic groups, etc.”

“One-Stop is for more than lay-off and closures. It can be used for expansions; Need to get the word out.”

“Need to educate employers on what you have to offer and what services are available.”

“Need to know what assistance is available, institutions and who will provide services.”

“Let service provider know each employees needs to be treated in respectful manner; care for employees.”

“Want to see a track record of success with references.”

“If good job opportunities for employees would be it easier.”

“If local labor market saturated, where will One-Stop help employees find other work that is comparable in skills and pay. Labor market can not always absorb all lay-offs.”

“Need to bring skill levels up in the local labor market.”

Exhibit 10

Participating Companies

Northwest Technical College

1. Bank of La Fayette
2. Walker County Schools
3. Quality Carpet Cushion (2)
4. Georgia Department of Labor
5. Hutcheson Medical Center
6. La Fayette Career Center
7. Catoosa County Government
8. Chattooga County Chamber of Commerce

Dalton Career Center

1. Global Employment Solutions
2. Georgia Department of Labor
3. Mednow, Inc.
4. Whitfield County Department of Family and Children Services
5. C & A Floor Coverings

Appalachian Technical College

1. Land & Associates. P. C. (CPA)
2. Royston, LLC.
3. Appalachian Technical College
4. Pickens County Board of Education

North Metro Technical College

1. Century Bank of Bartow County
2. Cartersville Medical Center
3. Griptex Industries
4. Unilever HPC
5. Bartow County Department of Family and Children Services
6. Adelpia Communications
7. Shaw Industries

Coosa Valley Technical College

1. Kelly Services
2. Inland Paperboard and Packaging, Inc.
3. The Fairbanks company
4. United community Bank
5. Profile Extrusion company
6. Clean Air America, Inc.
7. Floyd home Health Agency

Remote Participants

1. Jefferson Southern Corporation, Polk County
2. Cadillac Products Packaging Company, Paulding County
3. Northwestern Technical College, Walker County
4. Northwest Georgia RESA, Floyd County
5. Georgia Department of Labor, Catoosa County
6. Glad Manufacturing (Clorox), Whitfield County
7. Starcrest Nursing Home, Bartow County
8. Paulding County Government, Paulding County
9. Occupational Health Medicine, Bartow County
10. Bridges Agency (Financial), Bartow County
11. Bartow County Government, Bartow County

Exhibit 11: Employer Demographics

Sector of the Economy

Workforce Size	Service (a)	Manufacturing	Financial (b)	Wholesale & Retail Trade	Healthcare & Social Service	Public & Non-Profit	Desired Total
Less than 50	5	1	2		5	5	18
50 to 500	1	10	2		3	4	20
Over 500		3			1	6	10
Desired Total	4	14	4		9	15	48

Note: (a) Service Examples: Prof'l, Sci., Tech'l; Hotel & Food, Admin & Support, Arts & Entertainment, Recreation
 (b) Financial Examples: Banks, S & Ls, Insurance, Stock Brokers, Investment Advisors, Real Estate & Rental & Leasing